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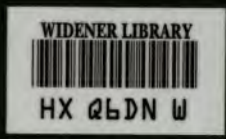

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MISS TOOSEY'S MISSION.

CHAPTER I.

Miss Toosey always wore a black silk dress on Sunday, and went three times to church. Morning, afternoon, and evening, as soon as the bell changed at the quarter, that black silk dress came out of Miss Toosey's little house in North Street, turned the corner into High Street, crossed the Market-place, passed under the archway into the churchyard, in at the west door, and up the middle aisle, past the free seats, which occupy the lower end of Martel church, and stopped at the second pew on the left-hand side, one sitting in which has been rented by Miss Toosey for many years. This pew is immediately in front of the churchwardens' seat, where those two dignitaries sit majestically, with a long rod placed conveniently on either hand, ready to be seized at a

moment's notice, to execute judgment on youthful offenders in the free seats, though the well-known fact that generations of paint and varnish have made them fixtures somewhat takes off from the respect and awe felt for them. Miss Toosey is short, and the pew-door has a tendency to stick; and when you have a Bible, prayer-book, hymn-book, spectacle-case, and umbrella in your hands, you cannot enter into a struggle on equal terms; and so when Mr. Churchwarden Wyatt happens to be in church in time, he leans over and opens the pew-door for Miss Toosey, "and very kind of him too, a most gentlemanly man Mr. Wyatt is, my dear."

The black silk was quite a part of Sunday in Miss Toosey's mind, and therefore holy, to a certain extent; she would have considered it disrespectful to the day to put on any other dress, and no stress of weather could prevent her wearing it; indeed, she thought it decidedly a want of trust in Providence to fear that heavy rain or deep snow might injure it. She would pin up the skirt inside out round her waist, with a reckless disregard of appearances, so that you could hardly guess she had any dress on at all under her shawl; but noth-

ing would have induced her to put on another. Of late years, too, she had not felt it quite right to wear it on week-days when she was asked out to tea; it seemed to her inappropriate, like reading a regular Sunday book on week-days, which has something profane about it. It had been through many vicissitudes; not even Miss Toosey herself could accurately recall what it was in its original form; and the first distinct incident in its existence was the black crape with which it was trimmed, in respect to the memory of Miss Toosey's father, — old Toosey, the parish doctor. This was fifteen years ago; and since then it had been unpicked and re-made several times, turned, sponged, dipped, French-chalked, cleaned, trimmed, and altered, till it would have required vast ingenuity to do anything fresh to it.

As the black silk was part of Sunday to Miss Toosey, so was Miss Toosey part of Sunday to many of the Martel people. The Miss Purts, the draper's daughters, in the Market-place, knew that it was time to put on their smart bonnets (the latest Paris fashion), when they saw Miss Toosey pass the window, so as to insure their clattering into church on

their high heels, tossing and giggling, not later than the *Venite.*

Old Budd, the clerk, with his white beard and wooden leg, always said "Good-morning, Miss Toosey; fine day, mum," as he stumped past her pew-door on his way to the vestry, which made her feel rather uncomfortable, as he said it out loud, and it did not seem quite right; but then Mr. Budd is such a good man, and, being a church official, no doubt he has a right to behave just as he pleases. Even Mr. Dodson, the late curate, after baptizing fifteen pugnacious babies, all crying lustily, said, as he passed Miss Toosey on his way back to the reading-desk, wiping the beads of perspiration from his good-natured red face, "Warm work, Miss Toosey."

I think that both Mr. Peters the rector, and Mr. Glover the curate, would quite have lost their place in the service if Miss Toosey's seat had been empty, as they neither of them could have preached with comfort without the fat, red-velvet cushion with the tassels, on which they laid their books.

I do not think it ever occurred to Miss Toosey that there was anything amiss in Martel church or its services. She was proud

of the fine, old gray stone tower, which had been built when men gave willingly of their best for the service of God, and so built "for glory and for beauty;" and she loved the roof of the nave, which was rich in oak carving, bleached white by time, with angels and emblems of wonderful variety and ingenuity. And all the rest of the church she took for granted, and did not wonder at the narrow, uncomfortable pews, where, as Mr. Malone, the Irish curate, said, "it was quite impossible to kneel down, and very difficult to get up again;" or at the free seats, put behind all the others; or at the large, steep galleries; or at the high pulpit rich in red velvet and dusty fringe, on one side, and the reading desk to match on the other, with the clerk's desk underneath, where Mr. Budd did his part of the service, *i. e.* the responses, as a clerk should do, in a strident, penetrating voice, and took a well-earned nap in the sermon when his duties were discharged. It did not strike her as curious that the seats in the chancel should be occupied by the Peters family on one side and by the Rossitters on the other, while the ladies and gentlemen of the choir displayed their smart bonnets or

Sunday waistcoats to great advantage in front of the organ, where, in return for their vocal exertions, they were privileged to behave as badly as their fancies led them. You see, Miss Toosey was not critical, and she had not been to any other church for many years, and custom draws a soft curtain over imperfections, and reverence is not quick to see irreverence in others, and prayer fills the air with clouds of incense through which we cannot easily see bonnets, but only Heaven itself; and as Miss Toosey knelt, being very short, you remember, and the pews high, she could only with her outward eyes see the angels in the roof and her prayer-book. And it was just the same with the sermons; as church was church to Miss Toosey, so a sermon was a sermon. Whether it was Mr. Peters, Mr. Glover, or Mr. Malone, Miss Toosey looked out the text in her little brown Bible, and put the bookmarker, with "Love the Jews," into the place, and gave her head a little nod, as if to show that the text was there, and no mistake about it; and then took off her spectacles, wiped them, put them into a case, gave her black silk skirt a slight shake to prevent creases, and then settled down to listen.

I will not undertake to say that Miss Toosey entered into all the subtleties of doctrine set forth over the red velvet pulpit-cushion; I will not even deny that sometimes the lavender ribbons on Miss Toosey's bonnet nodded, without much connection with the arguments of the discourse, and that the words "election and grace" grew faint and dreamy in her ears, and Mr. Peters's gray hair or Mr. Glover's whiskers disappeared from her sight. I am disposed to think that she did not lose very much; but Miss Toosey took it much to heart, so much so that she could hardly believe herself capable of it, and even contended that she was listening all the time, though she closed her eyes to pay greater attention. But sometimes the sermons kept Miss Toosey awake effectually, and made her feel very uncomfortable for some days afterwards; and this was when they were on the subject of conversion. Mr. Malone was especially strong on this point; and, after one of his powerful discourses, Miss Toosey would have a wakeful night, going through the course of her peaceful, uneventful life, trying to find that moment of awakening which other Christians seemed to find so easily, wondering if she

might date her conversion from a day when she was a little child, crying and being comforted at her mother's knee; or in the quiet, sober joy of her Confirmation; or when she followed her mother up the aisle, one Easter Day, in trembling awe to her first Communion; or in the days of her simple, girlish romance long ago, when her heart was overflowing with pure happiness; or to the days following so quickly when it came to an untimely end, and she sobbed herself to sleep, night after night, with her cheek (it was round and smooth then) pressed to that same little brown Bible, with some faded flowers between the leaves; or could it have been when her father died and she stood alone by his grave? None of these events seemed quite to answer to Mr. Malone's descriptions, and sometimes Miss Toosey was driven to fear that she must rank herself with the unconverted, to whom a few scathing words were addressed at the conclusion of the sermon.

On one occasion there was a revival at Martel, and meetings were held at the schoolroom, one of which Miss Toosey attended. There was much heat, and hymn-singing, and excitement; and Miss Toosey was agitated,

and hysterical, and impressed; but when the presiding clergyman, in an impassioned manner, invited all those who were conscious of conversion to remain, and the rest to leave, Miss Toosey, without a moment's hesitation, went out and found her way home, sobbing and broken-hearted.

Then, too, the doctrine of assurance troubled her sorely, feeling (as she did) sure only of her own weakness and God's great mercy. And so she grew very nervous and uncomfortable when people began to talk of their religious experiences, which seemed so much more satisfactory than her own.

You must not, however, suppose that Miss Toosey was at all High Church; on the contrary, she had a horror of Puseyites and of the opinions which she fondly imagined them to hold; such, for example, as works being the only means of salvation, without the faintest mixture of faith, which, as Miss Toosey said, is so directly opposite to the teaching of the Bible. She also spoke of the danger of the "multiplication of ordinances," a well-sounding sentence which Mr. Glover was rather fond of, and Miss Toosey always gave a little triumphant sniff after saying it.

for it is not every one who can make use of abstruse, theological expressions of many syllables. It is true that she went to church herself whenever there was an opportunity, and would have done so if Mr. Peters had largely increased the services, but that of course was different. She also regarded with suspicion the efforts of some of the young ladies of the parish, who had "high" tendencies, to introduce crosses surreptitiously into the decorations at Christmas, cunningly disguised with evergreens, and of odd and ornamental shapes.' She was firmly persuaded that the emblem of our faith had something Romish about it, and that it was safer to keep to circles and anchors and triangles; indeed, she distrusted the decoration excitement among the young ladies altogether, and looked back with regret to the days when the pew-opener used to put up sprigs of holly in the windows, and fasten bushes of the same to the lamps in the chancel.

CHAPTER II.

Now I must tell you about Miss Toosey's Mission, and I think it will surprise you to hear that her Mission was the conversion of the heathen, — not the heathen at Martel, though there were enough and to spare, even in that favored spot; not the heathen in London, or our great towns even; but the heathen in foreign parts, real *bonâ fide* black heathen, with war-paint and feathers, and strings of beads, and all the rest of it. Her Mission began in this manner: A missionary Bishop came to preach at Martel. I do not know quite how it happened, as he certainly did not pronounce "Shibboleth" with the same distinct and unctuous intonation which was deemed essential at Martel; but I have been told that he met Mr. Peters out at dinner, and that the rector, always good-natured, offered his pulpit, red-velvet cushion and all, for the Bishop's use on the following Sunday evening.

The Bishop gladly accepted the offer. He was not quick to see microscopic differences of opinion; the cut of a coat, a posture, or the use of a cant word, did not seem to him of such vital importance as he found attached to them among Churchmen at home; and he was fairly puzzled at the hot blood and animosity that arose from them, bidding fair even at times to rend the woven garment without seam. He had been used to a clearer, simpler atmosphere, a larger horizon, a wider span of heaven overhead, than we can get in our streets and lanes, making it easier, perhaps, to look up steadfastly, as those should whose lives are ever teaching them how far, how terribly "far, the Heaven is from the earth," where the earth lies in darkness and idolatry. To one who was used to the difference between Christians and heathen, the differences between Churchman and Churchman seemed unutterably small; so that he was fain to say with Abraham, "Let there be no strife between us, I pray, for we are brethren."

He had come home with his heart burning within him with the urgency of the work he left behind, confident that he could not fail to find help and sympathy in happy, rich, Chris-

tian England; in his waking thoughts, as well as in his dreams, there always stood by him a man of Macedonia, the Macedonia of his far-off labors, saying, "Come over and help us;" and he found that the love of many had waxed cold, and that indifference and scarcely concealed weariness received him wherever he went.

So he was glad to accept Mr. Peters's invitation, and though Mr. Malone looked rather sourly at him in the vestry, and even the rector was not quite so cordial to him as he had been at the dinner-party, still he scaled the heights of the pulpit with alacrity, to the enlivening strains of "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," which not even the "Mitre Hymn-book" and the Martel choir can rob of its charms.

The text which Miss Toosey found out in her little brown Bible was from St. John, the 6th chapter and 9th verse: "There is a lad here with five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are they among so many?" The Bishop began by describing the scene where the miracle occurred, — the barren hill-side; the blue sea of Galilee; the towns in the distance, with their white, flat-roofed houses,

nestling in the green valleys like "a handful of pearls in a goblet of emerald;" the sun setting behind the purple Galilean hills, and the soft evening light touching the mountain-tops with gold, and casting long shadows on the quiet sea, where the fishing-boats were going forth to their nightly work. And then he told of the weary, foot-sore crowd, gathered on the slope of the hill, far from home, and hungry and fainting, — women and little children, as well as men, — many of whom had come from far-away Capernaum and Cæsarea, skirting the north side of the lake for many a weary mile, on foot, to meet the ship that bore our Lord across the sea.

Whence can they buy bread in this wilderness? But among that helpless crowd there is One, foot-sore and weary and fasting like them, yet Who is the Creator Himself. "He Who maketh the grass to grow upon the mountains, and herb for the use of man," Who "feedeth the young ravens," and Who "filleth the hungry soul with good things;" and He is looking with infinite compassion on their want; and He says to His disciples, "Give ye them to eat." And then, abruptly, the Bishop turned from the story of the miracle to his own

work, and he told of the great extent of mountain, forest, and plain, of the mighty rivers, of the rich and fertile land, and the luxuriant beauty all around, fair as the promised land of which Moses said, "The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year." But the people of this fair land are, like the weary crowd on the hill-side, far from home — ah! how far from Heaven, with the deep, deep sea of ignorance rolling between; they are hungry, sinking for the want of the Bread of Life; but civilization and knowledge and light are far away from them across the ocean, and "how can we satisfy these men with bread here in the wilderness?" It is evening too; surely the sun of this world is getting near its setting, and casting long shadows, if we would but see them. Shall we send these poor souls away fasting? — these women and little children? Will they not faint by the way? How can they hope to reach their heavenly home without the Bread of Life?

But the Lord is looking on them with the same infinite compassion, and He is saying to me and to you, "Give ye them to eat." Is there not here this evening, among you Martel

people, a lad with five barley loaves and two small fishes for the Lord's use? It seemed so little to the disciples, scarcely worthy of mention. "What are they among so many?" Merely enough for two or three, and here are five thousand and more. But the Lord said, "Bring them hither to Me." He had no need of them. He could have commanded the stones to be made bread; He could have called manna down from heaven; He could have satisfied them with a word; but He was graciously pleased to take that poor and humble little store in His all-powerful hand; and it was sufficient: the people were filled, they had as much as they would, and there were yet fragments that remained. Never think of the smallness, the poorness of the instrument, when it is the Master's hand that uses it, — He who made this lovely world out of chaos, and formed the glorious light out of utter darkness. Do not be kept back by false humility, by thinking too much of the insignificance and worthlessness of the gift. Give your best, — give your all. "Bring them hither to Me," saith the Lord. What have you to give? Turn over your store, — yourself, that is best of all, most worthy offering, poor though it may

be — your money, your time, your influence, your prayers. Who so poor but what he has one or more of these barley-loaves of daily life to offer to Him Who gave us all? I am not here to beg and entreat for your money, though to our dim sight it seems sorely needed just now, when, from village after village, the cry comes to me for teachers and for light, and I have no men or means to send them; and, worse still is the silence of those who are in such utter darkness; they do not know their own need. But still we know and believe that it is the Lord's work, and it will be done. It may not be by me or you, but in His own good time it will be done. He does not need your money; He only offers you the glorious privilege of being fellow-workers with Him. Yours is the loss if you do not heed; the work will not suffer; only you will have had no share; only you may not have another opportunity given you; only the time may come when it will be said to you, "Forasmuch as ye did it not to these" (who are indeed poor, and sick, and in prison), "ye did it not to Me."

It was not by any means what the almshouse men called "a powerful discarse;" the old men belonging to Frowdes' charity, in their

snuff-colored coats, each with a large F on the left shoulder, clustering round the north door after service, shook their heads in disapproval.

"He don't wrusstle with 'un," said old Jacobs; "he ain't fit to hold a candle to old Thwackum, down at Ebenezer. Why, I have seen him punish that there pulpit cushion till the dust came out like anything, and he had to take off his neckcloth, it were that wet; that 's what I calls preaching now, and to think of the likes of this 'un being a Bishop."

Miss Baker too, of the firm of Silver and Baker, drapers in High Street, expressed her opinion in a high key, under an umbrella, as she went home along Church-lane, "that he did not preach the Gospel;" but then she was very particular, and the Apostle Paul himself would scarcely have come up to her standard of "Gospel" sermons.

There was not a very good collection either. You see it was partly from its being a wet evening, so that the congregation was altogether small; and it had not been given out on the preceding Sunday; and no bills had been printed and posted on the church-doors and

principal public-houses in the town, as was always done in the case of sermons in aid of the Irish Church Mission, or the Jews' Society. So people had not been attracted by the announcement of a real live Bishop; and those who came had not had time to get small change; and so at the end of the sermon, with the best intentions and a natural dislike to pass the basket without giving anything, they found themselves devoid of the necessary threepenny-bits and sixpences. So, when Mr. Mackenzie, the tall lawyer, who always held the basket lined with green baize at the north door, emptied its contents on the vestry table, and the other baskets added their quota, there was but a poor show; and Mr. Peters, kind man, when Mr. Malone was not looking, slipped a sovereign out of his waistcoat-pocket to add to the heap, more for the honor of Martel than from interest in the Mission; and he explained that unfortunately some of his best people were not at church, and that they had had a collection so very recently, and that he hoped that next time the Bishop was in those parts — but here a warning glance from Mr. Malone cut him short, and he did not commit himself further.

What a fortunate thing it was that Mr. Peters had a curate of such high principle!

"Who was that old woman sitting in front of Wyatt?" John Rossitter asked his mother, when the brougham door was closed and they were going down High Street slowly, with the drag on, for it was very steep, with a blurred view of lights and moving umbrellas through the rainy windows.

"My dear John, do you suppose I know every old woman in Martel?"

"No, but I thought you might have noticed her; her face was a sight to see in the sermon."

"Well, John," Mrs. Rossitter answered, rather fretfully, feeling conscious of a temporary oblivion on her own part in the middle of the sermon, "it was no wonder if any one went to sleep; the church was so hot; I felt quite faint myself."

And she felt whether her bonnet had got pushed on one side, and hoped she had not wakened with a snore.

John laughed: "I don't mean a sight to see *that* way, mother; that 's not so very unusual at Martel; but it was her absorbed interest that struck me as something out of the way."

"It must have been one of the young women at Purts'."

"My dear mother, don't insult those elegant creatures by supposing they would put on anything half so respectable as my old woman's bonnet; they would rather die first."

"Then I don't know who it could have been, unless it was Miss Toosey — lavender ribbons and hair done in a little curl on each side? Ah! then it is. Her father was old Toosey the doctor; he was parish doctor when we first came to Brooklands, and she was a pretty young girl, in a green spencer; and your father used to say —"

And here followed reminiscences unconnected with Miss Toosey's Mission, which I need not chronicle.

Mrs. Rossitter lived two miles from Martel, at Brooklands, and she attended church regularly twice on Sunday, "because it is a duty to set a right example to the lower orders." So the lower orders around Brooklands — mostly, as far as the men were concerned, smoking their pipes in their shirt-sleeves, hanging over a pigsty, or nursing their babies; mostly, as far as the women were concerned, waxing fierce in preparations for dinner, or

gossiping with their next-door neighbors — saw the Brooklands brougham pass four times on Sunday; and the children ran after and shouted "Whip behind!" and the babies were possessed with suicidal interest in the horses' feet, and toddled, or crawled, or rolled into imminent danger, according to their age or walking capacities.

When John Rossitter was down from London, he went with his mother; and when he was not, she went alone, because Humphrey altogether declined to go.

"It was more than any fellow could stand," he said, gnawing his yellow mustache, and looking down at his mother with those handsome, idle gray eyes of his, which were the most convincing of arguments, before which all her excellent reasons for attending church — such as "what people would say," and "how it would look," and "what a bad example it would set," if he did not go — crumbled to ashes. She found John more amenable; but I do not on this account credit John with any great superiority to Humphrey, only that he had greater powers of endurance, and was not so sure as Humphrey that the very surest way to please his mother was to please

himself. Then, too, Sunday mornings at Brooklands were apt to hang heavy on his hands, for he had not the resources of Humphrey. He could not spend an hour or two in contented contemplation of a family of fox-terrier puppies; he found that "the points" of the very cleverest little mare in creation palled after five minutes' serious consideration, and that the conversation of grooms and stablemen still left a good deal to be desired in the way of entertainment; in fact, he had none of the elevated and refined tastes of an English country gentleman; so John Rossitter went to church with his mother, and endured, with equal stoicism, sermons from Mr. Peters, Mr. Glover, or Mr. Malone. He did not yawn in the undisguised manner of Dr. Gardener Jones opposite, who let every one see what a fine set of teeth he had, and healthy red tongue, at short intervals; he did not go to sleep and snore like old Mrs. Robins, and one or two more; but when the regulation half-hour was over, his eyebrows would rise and the calm inattention of his face become ruffled, and his hand move quietly to his waistcoat-pocket and his watch appear, an action which Mr. Glover felt acutely in every fibre, though his back

was turned to John Rossitter, and he would grow red to the very finger-tips, and his "finally," "lastly," and "in conclusion," would get sadly muddled in his nervous efforts to make short cuts to the end. So strong had this habit of inattention become, that it would have required something much more striking than our missionary Bishop to startle him out of it; and it was only the sight of Miss Toosey's face that brought back his thoughts from their wanderings, to Martel church and its sleepy congregation, and the Bishop's voice from the high pulpit. He could see her through a vista of heads between Mr. Cooper's bald head and Miss Purts' feathers and pink rosebuds; now and then the view was cut off by Mrs. Robins giving a convulsive nod, or one of the little Miss Coopers fidgeting up a broad-brimmed hat.

"Was the sermon so eloquent?" John Rossitter wondered. Certainly that listening, rapt face was, — quite a common, little, wizen, old-maidish face, with nothing intellectual or noble about it, and yet transfigured into something like beauty with the brightness of a reflected light. Don't you know how sometimes a scrap of broken glass on a dust heap

will catch the sunlight and shine with quite dazzling brilliancy, and how a little smutty raindrop in a London court will hold the sun and a gleaming changing rainbow in its little mirror?

CHAPTER III.

"WHERE does Miss Toosey live?" said John Rossitter, on Monday morning; "I think I may as well go and call on her, as I have nothing else to do."

I do not know what impelled him to go. It is impossible to define motives accurately, even our own. We cannot say sometimes why we do a thing; every reason may be against it, — common sense, habit, inclination, experience, duty, all may be pulling the other way, and yet we tear ourselves loose, and do the thing, urged by some invisible motive of whose existence we are hardly conscious. And if it is so in ourselves, how much more difficult to dissect other people's motives! and it is generally safer to leave the cause alone altogether, and only regard the effects produced. So it is enough to say that, on that Monday morning, Miss Toosey heard the rattle of wheels along North Street, and, looking out, saw the Rossitters' dog-cart and high-stepping chestnut

nare, which, to her extreme surprise, stopped in front of her door.

"Something wrong with the harness," she concluded, as the little groom flew out, and stood at the horse's head, with his arms crossed.

"Bless the child!" Miss Toosey said, "as if the creature could not have swallowed him at a mouthful, top-boots and all!"

But her observation of the groom from the bedroom window was interrupted by a loud knock at the door, and before she had time to tie her cap-strings, or put a pin in the back of her collar, Betty came rushing up, out of breath and red-faced, with a card held in the corner of her apron, bearing the name "Mr. John Rossitter."

"And he said he hoped as how you 'd excuse his calling so early — and a flower in his button-hole beautiful," added Betty, in a snorting whisper, distinctly audible in the parlor below.

Then followed some hasty opening and shutting of drawers, and hurried footsteps; and then Miss Toosey descended, rather fluttered and nervous, with her Sunday cap on, and a clean pocket-handkerchief.

"I must introduce myself, Miss Toosey," John said, "for I dare say you have quite forgotten me."

"Forgotten you, Mr. John? Why, I knew you long before you were born, or thought of. Oh, dear!" said Miss Toosey, "I don't mean that, of course; but I knew your mamma before *she* was born —"

"I ought to apologize," John struck in, anxious to save Miss Toosey from any further floundering in the bogs of memory, "for coming so early; but the fact is, that I am going up to London this evening; and my mother tells me that Dr. Toosey had a very capital cure for toothache, and she thought you would very likely have kept it, and would let me have it."

Impostor that he was! looking at her with such serious, earnest eyes, when he had composed this ridiculous and barefaced excuse for calling as he came along.

Miss Toosey racked her brain to remember this renowned remedy, and could only recall an occasion when she had toothache, and her father dragged out a double tooth, with great exertion and bad language on his part, and great pain and many tears on hers.

"I cannot quite remember the remedy your mamma means; but I have a book full of very valuable prescriptions, which I will find at once."

"Pray don't trouble, Miss Toosey; I have no toothache at present; but if you would let my mother have it some time at your leisure, I should be greatly obliged."

And then they talked for five minutes about toothache; and John, smiling, showed such white, even teeth that you would have fancied he had not had much trouble with them; and you would have fancied right.

"What a curious book you have here," John Rossitter said, looking at a book lying open on the table. It was an old book, called *Voyages and Adventures;* and it was open at an awful picture of a cannibal feast, with a man being roasted in front of a fire, and a group of savages dancing ferociously round, in all the horrors of war-paint and feathers, and in a simple but effective costume of a necklace, a fringe round the waist, a ring in the nose, and a penny in the under lip.

Miss Toosey blushed; she was not used to fashionable picture-galleries where Eves and Venuses, in unadorned beauty, are admired

and criticised by the sensible young people of the present day.

"Though to be sure," she said afterwards, "it 's not so bad, as the poor things are black, so they don't look quite so naked; and I always think a white pig is a more indecent-looking creature than a black one."

So she turned his attention with great tact to the atlas that was also lying open on the table. It was the atlas that was in use fifty years ago, and which had been bought for Miss Toosey when she went to Miss Singer's "Academy for Young Ladies" to be finished. At this abode of learning, she had been taught to make wax-flowers and do crochet, to speak a few words of what was supposed to be French, and to play a tune or two laboriously on the piano, — an education which was considered very elegant and elaborate at that time, but would hardly, I am afraid, qualify her for one of the Oxford and Cambridge local examinations, or even for a very high standard at a national school. She had also learnt a little geography and the use of the globes, but not enough to survive for fifty years; and she felt quite at sea this morning, when she reached down the long-unused atlas to find

the position of the diocese of Nawaub, and, after long study, had arrived at the conclusion that it must be on the celestial globe, which had always been a puzzle to her.

It was no wonder that she had not been able to find Nawaub, for where the towns and rivers and mountains and plains stood, which the Bishop had described, there was only marked on the map, "Undiscovered territory," a vague-looking spot altogether, gradually shading off into the sea without any distinct red or blue line to mark the extent of *terra firma*, as in other parts of the world.

John Rossitter showed her where he imagined Nawaub to be, and then inquired if she were interested in Missions.

"Well, Mr. John," Miss Toosey said, "I don't mind telling you, though I have not told any one else, except Betty; but I 've made up my mind to go out to Nawaub as soon as I can arrange everything."

"As a missionary, Miss Toosey?"

"Yes, Mr. John, as a missionary."

She spoke quite quietly, as if she were not sixty-five, with a tendency to asthma, and more than a tendency to rheumatism, — a nervous, fidgety old maid, to whom a journey to Bristol

was an event to flutter the nerves, and cause sleepless nights, and take away the appetite for some time beforehand. I think the very magnitude of her resolution took away her attention from the terrible details, just as we lose sight of the precipices, chasms, and rocks that lie between, when we are looking to the mountain-top. The way to Bristol was beset with dangers, such as losing the train, getting wrong change when you take your ticket, the draughtiness of the waiting-room, the incivility of the porters, the trains starting from unexpected platforms, the difficulty of opening doors and shutting windows, the constant tendency to get into smoking-carriages by mistake, not to speak of railway accidents, and murderers and thieves for travelling companions; but these were lost sight of in the prospect of a journey to the other end of the world, full of real, substantial dangers of which she was ignorant. This ignorance was no doubt a great help to her in some ways; she could not form the slightest idea of what a missionary's life really is; nor can you, reader, nor can I, though we may have read missionary books by the dozen, which Miss Toosey had not. But this same ignorance, while it covered up many real difficulties, also

painted grotesque horrors before Miss Toosey's mind, which might well have frightened any old maiden lady of sixty-five. She mixed up "Greenland's icy mountains" and "Afric's coral strands" with great impartiality in her ideas of Nawaub, forming such a frightful combination of sandy deserts and icebergs, lions and white bears, naked black savages and snow-drifts, that the stoutest heart might have quailed at the prospect; and yet, when Miss Toosey came down to breakfast that morning, with her mind firmly made up to the venture, her little maid, Betty, did not notice anything remarkable about her, except that her cap was put on wrong side in front, — which was not a very unusual occurrence, — and that she stirred up her tea with her spectacles once. Her interview with Betty had been rather upsetting. Betty was not quick at taking in new ideas; and she had got it so firmly into her head that Miss Toosey was wishing to administer a reproof to her about the handle of a certain vegetable dish, "which come to pieces in my hand as was that cracked," that it was some time before she could be led to think differently; but when at last a ray of the truth penetrated her mental fog, her feelings can only be described by her

own ejaculation, "Lor, now!" which I fear may offend ears polite. She had not been at church the evening before, having stepped round to see her mother, who was "doing nicely, thank you, with her fourteenth, a fine boy, as kep on with fits constant, till Mr. Glover half-christened him, which James Joseph is his name, and better ever since."

So it required all Miss Toosey's eloquence to put her scheme before Betty's plain common sense, so as to appear anything but a very crazy notion after all; and it was not till after half-an-hour's severe talking, and more than one tear falling on the two and a half pounds of neck of mutton, that Betty gave in, which she did by throwing her apron over her head, and declaring, with a sob, that if Miss Toosey "would go for to do such a thing, she (Betty) would take and go too, that she would;" and Miss Toosey had to entreat her to remember her poor mother before making up her mind to such a step.

But to come back to John Rossitter. He was a barrister, you must know, and used to examine witnesses, and to turn their heads inside out to pick out the grains of truth concealed there; and then, too, he had a great

talent for listening, which is a rarer and more valuable gift even than that of fluent speech, which he also had at command on occasion. He had too a sympathetic, attentive interest in his face, that, if it was assumed, would have made a great actor of him, and that opened the people's hearts to him, as the sun does the flowers. And so Miss Toosey found herself laying her mittened hand on his coat-sleeve, and looking up into his eyes for sympathy, and calling him "my dear," "just for all the world," she said, "as if he had been an old woman too."

And what did he think of it all? Was he laughing at her? Certainly now and then there was a little twitch at the corner of his mouth and a sparkle in his eye, and once he laughed aloud in unconcealed amusement; but I like John Rossitter too well to believe that he was doing what Dr. Gardener Jones called "getting a rise out of the old lady." It was so very easy to make fun of Miss Toosey, and draw her out and show up her absurdities, —even Mr. Glover, who was not a wit, could be exquisitely funny at her expense. But John Rossitter was too much of a sportsman to aim with his small-bore rifle at a little sparrow in a

hedgerow; he left that sort of game for the catapults and pop-guns of the yokels.

And so Miss Toosey confided to him all the difficulties that had already come crowding into her head as she sat over her work that morning, any one of which would have occupied her mind for days at any other time, — the giving notice to leave her house, the disposal of the furniture, — "and you know, Mr. John, I have some really valuable pictures and things;" and she could not trust herself to glance at the portrait of old Toosey over the fireplace, in a black satin waistcoat and bunch of seals, a frilled shirt, a high complexion, and shiny black hair, with Corinthian pillars behind him, lest her eyes, already brimful, should overflow. She even consulted him as to whether it would be worth while to order in more coal, and lamented that she should have taken her sitting in church for another whole year only last Saturday. And then, without quite knowing how, she found herself discussing that all-important subject, dress, with John Rossitter.

"Though to be sure, Mr. John, how should you know about such things?"

"Indeed, Miss Toosey, I 'm not so ignorant as you think; and I quite agree with you

that nothing looks so nice as a black silk on Sunday."

And Miss Toosey at once resolved to put a new braid round the bottom of the skirt as a good beginning of her preparations.

"I've got upstairs," Miss Toosey said reflectively, "a muslin dress that I wore when Rosina Smith was married. You remember Rosina Smith, Mr. John? No, of course not! She must have married before you were born. Sweet girl, Mr. John, very sweet! That dress has been rough dried for thirty years, and it's not quite in the fashion that ladies wear now; in fact, the skirt has only three breadths, which is scanty, you know, as dresses go; but I thought," and there Miss Toosey glanced timidly at the picture of the cannibals, which still lay open, "that perhaps it would not matter out there."

"No, indeed, Miss Toosey," John answered, "I should think three breadths would appear liberal and ample allowance among people whose skirts" — he was going to say, "are conspicuous from their absence," but from Miss Toosey's heightened color he changed it to "are not court trains."

The next question was whether she had better have it got up before leaving Martel.

"It might get crumpled in packing; but then, how can one guess what sort of laun-dresses one may find at the other side of the world, — not used, most likely, to getting up fine things."

"I have heard," said John, very seriously, "that in some parts missionaries try as much as possible to become like the nations they are wishing to convert, and that the Roman Catholic priests in China shave their heads and wear pigtails."

"Yes, Mr. John, I have heard that," Miss Toosey said; "and their wives" (you see she did not rightly understand the arrangements of our sister Church as to the celibacy of the clergy) "cripple their feet in small shoes, blacken their teeth, and let their finger-nails grow."

"I suppose," says John, drawing *Voyages and Adventures* nearer, and looking at the pictures reflectively, "that the Nawaub missionaries don't go in for that sort of thing."

Miss Toosey grew red to the very finger-tips, and her back stiffened with horror.

"No, Mr. John, there is a point beyond which I cannot go!"

"To be sure! to be sure!" said John con-

solingly, "and you see there were no signs of anything of the kind about the Bishop."

"Then there is the food," Miss Toosey went on, reminded of the subject by a whiff of roast mutton from the kitchen; "I 'm afraid they are cannibals, and I don't think I ever could get used to such a thing, for I have never been able to touch sucking-pig since an uncle of mine said it was just like a baby, though of course he was only in joke."

John reassured her on this point. But now he presented quite a new difficulty to her mind.

"Do you understand the Nawaub language? I am told it is difficult to acquire."

It had never occurred to Miss Toosey that these mysterious people, who were a sort of combination of monkey and chimney-sweep, spoke a language of their own which she could not understand, and that they might not be able to comprehend the pure Somersetshire English with which she meant to convert them. She had never been brought much in contact with foreigners, so that she had never realized fully the effect of the Tower of Babel. One day a French beggar had come to the door, and Miss Toosey had summoned up courage to pronounce the magic words, "Parlez vous

Français," which was one of the sentences she had learnt at Miss Singer's; and the beggar (the French being proverbially quick-witted) had recognized his native tongue; and thereupon ensued such a torrent of rapid speech and violent gesticulation, such gabbling and grimacing, that Miss Toosey was quite frightened, and relapsed into plain English when she could edge in another word. But then this impudent fellow pretended he did not understand, and kept on saying, "Not know de English vot you mean," though Miss Toosey spoke slowly and very loud, and even finally tried a little broken English, which must be easier to foreigners than the ordinary style of speaking. But the man was obstinate, and went away at last shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders in a way which Miss Toosey felt was very impudent; "but then, poor creature, he may have been a papist."

"I 've not thought about that, Mr. John; but I know that savages always like beads and looking-glasses, though what pleasure such remarkably plain people can get out of a looking-glass I can't imagine. But I've a lot of beads put away in one of my boxes upstairs when I 've time for a regular good turn-out; and as

for looking-glasses, I saw some the other day at Gaiter's, with gilt frames, for a penny, that make one's nose look crooked, and one eye larger than the other, that I think will do nicely."

"By Jove!" says John, "an uncommonly good idea—the very thing! I 'll take a look at them as I go home, which I must do now, or I shall be late for lunch."

But before leaving he advised her not to do anything in a hurry, but before taking any decided step, such as having her dress starched, or giving notice to leave her house, or laying in a stock of looking-glasses, to consult some old friend, on whose opinion she could rely.

"There 's Mackenzie," he said, "why not go to him?"

But Miss Toosey had an uncomfortable feeling about lawyers, connecting them with verses in the Gospels beginning with "woe"; and though the little Mackenzies were her great friends and constant visitors, she avoided their father. She suggested Miss Baker; but when she added that she was "a really Christian person," John discouraged the idea, and they finally agreed that she should consult Mr. Peters, who had known her nearly all her life.

"He 's not a bad sort of old fellow out of church," John said, rather shocking Miss Toosey by his want of reverence for the rector; "and he has got some sense in his head as well as good nature. So you go to him, Miss Toosey, and the next time I come home, I 'll come in and have another crack with you, if you are not off to the North Pole or the Moon."

John Rossitter smiled more than once as he drove home in the dog-cart, at the recollection of Miss Toosey's confidences; but I fear my readers may have grown impatient of the absurdities of an ignorant old woman, who had got a craze in her head. Yes, she was old and poor and weak and ignorant, it is quite true. It was a very contemptible barley-loaf which she had to offer, compared with your fine, white, wheaten cake of youth and riches and strength and learning; but remember she offered her best freely, willingly, faithfully; and when once a thing is offered it is no longer the little barley-loaf in the lad's hand, but the miraculous, satisfying Bread of Heaven in the hand of the Lord of the Harvest, more than sufficient for the hungry multitude.

CHAPTER IV.

"You are making fun of me, Mr. John."

"I am incapable of such an action, Miss Toosey."

Six months have passed since my last chapter, and John Rossitter has paid many visits to the little house in North Street. Indeed, he rarely came to Brooklands without going to see Miss Toosey, drawn by a strange attraction which he hardly understood himself; though he once told his mother that he had fallen in love, and asked her how she would like Miss Toosey for a daughter-in-law.

Miss Toosey is still at Martel, and likely to remain so. Her interview with Mr. Peters put an end to her idea of becoming a missionary, as John Rossitter quite expected, and also provided the rector with a good joke, over which he laughs till the tears run down his cheeks. It was a very alarming interview to Miss Toosey altogether, as the rector was seized with an attack of coughing in the middle, and sputtered

and choked till Miss Toosey longed to pat him on the back, if she had dared to venture on such a familiarity with a Church dignitary; and for many months she puzzled Mrs. Peters by anxious inquiries after the rector's cold and the sad delicacy of his throat, and advised gargling with port-wine and alum, and other decoctions of marvellous efficacy.

Miss Toosey's missionary ardor was by no means damped, only it was turned into a fresh channel. "Your money," the Bishop had said, "was another of those barley-loaves of every-day life that most people had in some proportion to offer;" thinking principally of the luxury and extravagance of fashionable life, and of the superfluity that might so well be cast into his empty treasury. There was not much luxury or extravagance in the little house in North Street; indeed, it was only by close management that two ends could be brought to meet; and even in little charities to poor neighbors (infinitesimally small though they might be) she was never in danger of offering to God that which cost her nothing. So it was an unsatisfactory thing to review her expenditure, with a view to greater economy, "with butchers' meat quite a fancy price, and

everything else to match;" but she was not easily daunted, as you know, and she applied to Mr. Peters to procure her a box in which to collect for the Nawaub Mission. She did not allow him to forget it or to convince her that a Church Missionary box, or one for the Irish Society, would do quite as well; and when at last she had it, she carried it home with great pride, and gave it the place of honor in the centre of her table on the bead mat, in place of the lava inkstand that had been one of Mrs. Toosey's wedding presents.

It was this box that was now forming the subject of conversation between her and Mr. Rossitter, for she was to take it that very afternoon to the rectory to be opened, and the contents were to be forwarded to the Bishop. John had been commenting on its weight, and had told Miss Toosey that she would be obliged to have the omnibus from the "Hare and Hounds" to take it to the rectory, or at any rate a wheelbarrow and a strong man. And so it came that she accused him of laughing at her.

"But it really is very heavy. I wonder you are not afraid of thieves coming to carry it off at night."

"Well, Mr. John, I was rather nervous now and then. There have been very odd noises at night, and though Betty says it 's the mice, I can't always quite believe it. I always hide the box when I go out, and now and then I forget where I put it; and, oh dear! what a search we had the other day! I was in such a fright, and where do you think it was? Why, behind the shavings in the fireplace. Was n't it a capital place? No thief would have dreamt of looking there."

"It 's a good thing that you are going to empty it to-day, or I might have been tempted to play burglar to-night."

"Well, you see, Mr. John, it 's not really so valuable as you might think, for it 's chiefly pence and a good sprinkling of farthings, and they don't come up to much of a sum. You see I have been obliged to take a little here and a little there, not being rich, Mr. John, or having much to spare. One thing I always put in, 'Your change, with thanks;' don't you know those pretty little envelopes that they put pence in at Knight's and Jones's and one or two other places, with 'Your change, with thanks,' in mauve on the back? I always took that for my box, and I felt quite pleased

when they had not a threepenny bit, so that I got more pence. And then, when the butcher's book came to five and sixpence halfpenny, Mr. Barker often says, 'Never mind the halfpenny, Miss Toosey,' and I put it into my box; and sometimes I get a halfpenny on the washing. Of course it seems very little, but it all helps. And then I fine myself. I got a good deal that way. A halfpenny if I lose my spectacles. A penny if I go to sleep in church; yes, Mr. John, I 'm sorry to say I do drop off now and then. I know it 's very wrong, but it 's wonderful how it cures you of such habits if you have to pay for them; I don't lose my spectacles. half so often as I used to, indeed I feel quite vexed sometimes that I don't get more fines; but I don't think it fair to lose them on purpose. I might save a good deal more if it was n't for Betty. She 's a good girl and honest, and much attached to me; but she 's very obstinate and wrong-headed. The fuss that girl made about my letting the fire out now and then of an afternoon; for the winter has been mild, Mr. John, and coals such a price! After I 'd done it once or twice, she found out it was not an accident, and she would come

bouncing in and put on coals every half-hour, till there was a fire fit to roast an ox, and once she gave warning because I did not take a second helping at dinner. But there 's one thing I can do without another year, which no one can object to, and that is my sitting in church. The free-seats are so comfortable that it really would be a change for the better, except perhaps as to the hearing."

Just at this point some fresh visitors arrived, and John prepared to go; but, finding the passage blocked by a double perambulator, and a smiling nurse and nursemaid exchanging confidences with Betty at the door, and hearing the tallest of the visitors (who was about as high as the table) declare that "Mamma said they were not to stop, but she sent her love and the *Graphic*," he resumed his seat, and offered a knee and an inspection of his watch to the two nearest young Mackenzies. There were nine young Mackenzies, of all ages; every year a fresh curly head or Sunday hat appeared in the square pew by the north door, which Mr. Peters compared to a pigeon pie, till at last it ran over altogether into another seat by the pulpit, which could hardly contain them now.

Miss Toosey's present visitors were the younger detachment, all of them pretty more or less with that beauty which has been called "the sacrament of goodness and innocence," — cheerful souls, not tall enough to see troubles, — very well contented with life as seen from near the ground, which is, I fancy, a much more amusing point of view than we enjoy. They had a good deal of information to give, unintelligible to John, but Miss Toosey gave a free translation, which enlightened his darkness. Life was more than usually cheerful that morning, for they had met that walking money-bag, papa, as they went out, whose store of pennies was inexhaustible when he could be cajoled or teased into feeling in his pocket. To-day, in a moment of lavish generosity, he had given a penny all round, even to Kitty, who had conveyed it at once to her mouth, without waiting for the visit to Mrs. Goodenough's, which transformed pennies into all that heart can desire.

"Mine penny!" says Mabel, who is rather solemnized by her position on John's knee; and she allows him to catch a glimpse of her treasure, clasped tightly in her soft knitted

glove, in which the fingers live all together in dimpled friendliness, and the thumb only enjoys a house to itself.

"What are you going to buy?" asks John.

"Bung," is the decided answer.

Meanwhile the other children are examining the money-box on the table, rattling its contents in a manner deafening to older ears, till Miss Toosey begins to tell them of the poor little black children who never go to church or say their prayers, which rouses great interest.

"Naughty, wicked little children," is the universal opinion.

"Poor little things!" says Miss Toosey reprovingly, "they have not any church to go to, and they have never been taught to say their prayers."

I am afraid some of the little Mackenzies were disposed to envy the little black children, who could go straight into their cribs when they were sleepy, and play at dolls any day in the week. But they were discreetly silent while Miss Toosey explained that the money in the box was to go out to make them good little black boys and girls.

"Make them white," says Ben decisively.

Miss Toosey is embarrassed, regarding things from a severely literal point of view; but John comes to the rescue.

"Yes, that 's about it, young man."

And just then Maudie discovers the "dear little darling hole" at the top where the pennies go in, and all the children admire it and feel it, and Mabel pats with her woolly gloves, repeating gravely, "Make black boy white."

I don't know quite how it happened, for all the other children were under the sofa, trying to catch Sammy the cat, and Miss Toosey distracted by her anxiety lest they or the cat should get hurt, and Mabel was placidly tapping the box with her penny, repeating, "Make black boy white" at intervals; when John heard a sudden rattle, and, looking down, said, "Hullo!" for the knitted glove was empty, and Mabel looked up at him with rather an awe-struck face, repeating, "Make black boy white."

"Oh, Mr. John!" Miss Toosey exclaimed, with her eyes filling with tears, "the dear, sweet little angel, giving her little all to the Mission! How touching! — how beautiful!"

John, however, whose eyes were not full of tears, saw an ominous quivering about the lit-

tle angel's under lip, and an anxious feeling of knitted gloves round the "dear, darling little hole," as if the penny might yet be recovered, and as if the giver had not realized the fatal and irretrievable nature of putting into a missionary-box. The full sense of her loss at last overwhelmed her, and she burst into uncontrollable grief, "I wants my penny," being the burden of the tale.

It was in vain John handed her over to Miss Toosey, who quickly supplied her with another penny, and supplemented it with a biscuit and a lump of sugar; it was not "mine penny, what papa give me!" and at last she was carried off sobbing, and casting looks of fear and aversion at the missionary-box on the table.

That afternoon, as John was on the way to the station, he saw Miss Toosey wending her way thoughtfully up High Street, and he crossed over and joined her. She was on her way home from the rectory, and her first remark to John Rossitter was, "Do you believe in miracles, Mr. John?"

"As described in the Bible?"

"Oh, no; of course every one believes in them. I mean miracles now."

"Well, Miss Toosey, if you mean winking

Virgins and hysterical peasant girls, I am afraid I am rather sceptical."

"Ah, Mr. John! that 's what I thought to myself. It 's popish to believe in such things nowadays, — all superstition and such like, — so I 'm glad I did not tell Miss Baker what came into my head."

"May I ask what it was? I don't think you are at all popish."

"Well, I 'll tell you. It 's my missionary-box. Now, Mr. John, how much do you think there was in it?"

"I have not the least idea."

"Well, there was six pounds nine and sevenpence three farthings." Miss Toosey's voice sank to an impressive whisper, and she stood still, looking at John as if he might be so overcome by surprise as to drop his bag and umbrella, or require support to prevent him from falling. But he only said, —

"You don't say so," in a very ordinary tone of voice.

"Six pounds nine and sevenpence three farthings," repeated Miss Toosey, emphasizing the six pounds, as if he had not appreciated the vastness of the sum.

"Ah!" said John; "I 'm sure it does credit

to you, Miss Toosey; who would have thought that 'Your change, with thanks' would have added up so. I am afraid you must have gone to sleep in church very often."

"But it could not have been that," went on Miss Toosey solemnly. "One pound nine and sevenpence three farthings were principally in coppers, and any sixpenny or fourpenny-bits I could account for. But the five pounds were in a note, so it could not have been change or a fine."

"You must have slipped it in some day by chance with other money."

"No, for I never have notes. When I draw my money I always get it in gold, for I am always afraid of notes blowing into the fire or getting torn up. And, besides," went on Miss Toosey, "I 'm not so rich, Mr. John, that I could lose even sixpence without knowing it."

"It is very strange," said John.

"Strange!" seemed a mild expression to Miss Toosey, to whom it appeared miraculous. "I don't know how to account for it, Mr. John. I suppose it's wrong to think it a miracle, but I could not help thinking of what happened this morning."

"What was that?"

"Why, don't you remember that dear child putting her penny into the box?"

"Oh, yes, and making such a hullaballoo afterwards."

Miss Toosey had not wished to recall that part of the affair. "It was so sweetly done."

"Yes, but you gave it back directly."

Miss Toosey felt quite cross at such inconvenient remarks, interrupting her miracle; but she continued, relapsing into a confidential whisper, —

"You see, Mr. John, it was a lad that brought the five barley-loaves, and I thought perhaps the baby's penny might have been turned into a five-pound note."

John made no comment, and she went on as much to herself as to him, —

"I suppose it 's popish to think of such a thing; and besides, one would have thought if it had been a miracle it would have been quite a new Bank of England note; but it was one of Tuckey's, crumpled and dirty, that had been cut in half, and joined down the middle with the edge of stamps, and it had Mr. Purts' name written on the back. But still," said Miss

Toosey wistfully, as they came to the station-road, and John shook hands in parting, "it 's God that gives the increase anyhow, miracle or not, and He knows all about it."

CHAPTER V.

MIRACLES do not happen every day; and Miss Toosey's money-box did not contain a bank-note the next time it was opened, or any sum that Miss Toosey could not well account for; indeed, it was rather less than more than she expected, even though the cost of her sitting in church was added to it. She did not, however, carry out her plan of sitting in the free-seats, for when she spoke to Mr. Budd about giving up her seat, Mr. Peters happened to be present, and he would not hear of such a thing. "Why, Miss Toosey, we should not know ourselves if you were not in your usual place." And Mr. Budd added, that "Some one, as did not wish to be mentioned, had offered to pay the rent rather than Miss Toosey should give it up." So it was arranged that she should still occupy the seat, at any rate till it was wanted for some one else; and as the Martel congregations were not overflowing, Miss Toosey was not likely to be turned out. She

did not quite like this arrangement: she felt rather like an impostor as she passed the free-seats, and Mr. Wyatt opened the pew-door for her; and it took off much of the pleasure when she dropped the money (that would otherwise have been paid to Mr. Budd) into her box; for, as she said, she did not feel the want of it, so to hardly seemed like giving at all.

I must not stop to describe at any length Miss Toosey's other missionary efforts, though she did not forget the other barley-loaves of which the Bishop had spoken, — "her time, her influence, and her prayers," — or I could tell you of her numerous disappointments in answering advertisements such as — "To those of either sex, anxious to increase their income;" and "£2 weekly easily realized;" and of her venturing a 5*s.* subscription to a "Ladies' Needlework Society," which entitled her to send six articles for sale to a shop in a fashionable part of London; and how she accomplished an antimacassar of elaborate design to send up there. As to her influence, that was a puzzling matter to one who had such a humble opinion of herself as Miss Toosey; and she nearly worked herself into a nervous fever through her attempts to mention the subject

to some of the wealthy shopkeepers or others in Martel; and at last she adopted the plan of distributing leaflets, and invested in a small bundle on missionary subjects, which she left about in a surreptitious, stealthy way, in shops, or at the railway-station, or slipped between the pages of a "Society" book, or even sometimes on the high road, with a stone to keep them from blowing away. Even with these precautions, she managed to give great offence to Mrs. Gardener Jones, who found a leaflet in a book sent on from Miss Toosey's, and who, being of a very dark complexion and Eastern cast of countenance, took the matter as a personal insinuation about her birth. So it was quite a relief to Miss Toosey to turn to the last barley-loaf that the Bishop had mentioned, — "her prayers;" at any rate, she could give that with all her heart. She found a missionary prayer in an old magazine, written in an inflated, pompous style, with long words and involved sentences, as different as possible from the great simplicity of that prayer in which children of all ages and degrees of learning through all time are taught to address "Our Father;" but she was not critical; and the feeling she expressed in those words was

not rendered less simple or earnest by its pompous clothing.

"Where is Miss Toosey?" John Rossitter asked his mother one Sunday morning, as they drove home from church; "she was not there this morning."

"Well, I think I heard some one say she was ill. Yes, it was Mr. Ryder told me she was laid up with cold or something. She has not been at church for several Sundays; and really the draught from the vestry-door is dreadful."

After church that evening, a sudden impulse seized John to go and see how Miss Toosey was; and when he had packed his mother into the brougham, with her rugs and furs, he turned off towards North Street, among the groups of people returning from church. It was a cold October evening, with great, solemn, bright stars overhead, and a frosty stillness in the air, which sets one listening for something above the trifling noises of this little world. Sunday visitors were rare at Miss Toosey's, and, as Betty said, "It give her quite a turn" when John's sharp knock came at the door.

"She 's very middlin'," she said, in answer

to John's inquiries; "and she 've been terribly low this evening, as ain't like her."

"What 's the matter?"

"Well, Mr. Ryder do say as it 's the brongtypus and indigestion of the lungs," said Betty in an awful voice, feeling that so many syllables must prove fatal; "and as I was setting by the kitching fire last night a coffin popped right out, and —"

"All right," said John. "Is she in bed?"

"No, she ain't kep' her bed a whole day, though she did ought to. But come in, doee now; it will cheer her up a bit to see you."

John Rossitter was quite shocked to see the change in Miss Toosey when he went into the parlor. She was sitting in the arm-chair by the fire, wrapped up in a big shawl, looking so small and shrunken and old and feeble, that you could hardly have recognized the brisk little lady who was prepared to cross the seas and enter on the toils and perils of a missionary life; indeed, she looked more ready for the last short journey across Jordan's narrow stream, which ends all our travelling days, and to enter into the life where toils and perils are replaced by rest. She had been crying too, and could hardly summon up a wintry smile

to receive John; and the tears overflowed more than once while he talked of his journey down, and his mother's rheumatism, and the tree that had been blown down the night before in their garden, trying to interest her and distract her thoughts by talking on indifferent subjects. His hand was resting on the table as he spoke, and, without thinking, he took hold of the missionary-box close by, and weighed it in his fingers. He hardly knew what he had in his hand, till Miss Toosey burst out crying, and covered her eyes with her handkerchief.

"It is nearly empty," sobbed the poor old lady; "nearly empty!"

And then John Rossitter pulled his chair nearer to hers, and laid one of his warm, strong hands on her poor little weak cold one, and said, "What is it you are fretting about? Tell me."

And then she told him, sometimes interrupted by her sobs, sometimes by the fits of coughing that left her very breathless and exhausted. It had all failed, all the five barley-loaves she had had to offer; they were all worthless. She was too old and foolish and ignorant to give *herself* for the work; she was too poor to give any *money*, and the little she

had saved with much care must go now for the doctor's bill; she had tried to give her *time*, but her antimacassars would not sell, and she could not paint photographs; then she tried her *influence;* but she did not think she had any, for every one laughed when she spoke to them about the missions, and Mrs. Gardener Jones was offended when she gave her a tract with a negro's face on it, and "Am I not a man and a brother?"

"Then there was only my prayers, Mr. John, and I did think I could have done that at least; and I did keep on regularly with that prayer out of the magazine, but the last three nights I've been so tired and worn out that Betty would make me say my prayers after I was in bed; and I don't really think I could have knelt down; and every night I've dropped off to sleep before I got to the poor heathen. So I've failed in that too. And I've been thinking, thinking, thinking, as I sat here to-night, Mr. John, that perhaps the Lord would not take my barley-loaves, because they were so good-for-nothing; but I'd nothing else, nothing else!"

I do not think that John Rossitter had ever spoken a word on religious subjects in his

life; he avoided discussion on such matters like the plague; and he was one of those reserved, deep natures who shrink from letting curious eyes peer into the sanctuary of their faith, and from dissecting their religious opinions with that clumsy scalpel, the tongue. Uninspired words seemed to him to be too rude and unwieldy to convey the subtle mysteries of faith, to break with their jarring insufficiency into the harmony of praise, to weigh down the wing of prayer that is struggling towards Heaven, to trouble the waters where we are trying to see the reflection "as in a glass darkly." There is but one power can open the close-sealed lips of such a nature, and that is when the angel takes a live coal from the great Altar of love and lays it on his mouth; and then he speaks, and with a power wanting in the glib outpourings of a shallower nature. And so John Rossitter found himself speaking words of comfort to Miss Toosey, which seemed like a new language to his unaccustomed lips; telling her how small, how poor everything earthly is in God's sight, and yet how nothing is too small, nothing too poor for the good Lord's notice; how the greatest saint is, after all, only an

unprofitable servant; and how He can take a loving, humble heart in His hand and make it as much as He would.

"And you 're sure, quite sure, that it 's not because He 's angry with me that He has not made use of me?"

"Dear old friend, He may make use of you yet."

She was coughing badly just then, and when the fit was over she shook her head. "Not very likely now, Mr. John; but He knows I was willing, so it does n't matter."

She got more cheerful then, and asked him to come and see her again before he went back to London, which he promised to do; and then he rose to go away.

"You must not fret about the empty box," he said, "or I shall scold you next time I come. And, look here, Miss Toosey, you have never asked me to subscribe, though I have often teased you by pretending to put buttons and rubbish into the box."

"Will you really?" she said. "I always fancied that you did not hold with missions, and thought them rather nonsense, though you were so kind to me about it; but if you would, it would be a comfort to think the box was not quite empty."

He felt in his pocket, but his purse was not there. "You must give me credit, Miss Toosey," he said, smiling; "I shall consider it a debt. I promise to give — let me see — I must think how much I can afford. I promise to give *something* to your Mission. And now make haste to bed, and get well."

She was collecting her things together to go upstairs, — her spectacle-case, Bible, and one or two books; and out of one of them a printed bit of paper slipped and fluttered to John Rossitter's feet as he stood at the door. It was the prayer for missions cut out of the magazine. He picked it up.

"And don't fret yourself about the prayer either," he said; "let me have it, may I? And suppose I say it for you? And don't you think that 'Thy kingdom come' will do for your missionary prayer till you are better?"

And she smiled and nodded just like her old self as he went out.

"She will soon be better," John said to Betty, as he passed her in the passage; but he did not guess how soon.

"Mother," he said next morning, coming into the breakfast-room with a large bunch of

bloomy grapes in his hand, "will you make my peace with Rogers? I have cut the best bunch in his house, and I go in fear of my life from his vengeance."

"My dear John, how very inconsiderate you are! He will be so vexed! Why could not you have asked him for it?"

"It was a sudden temptation that overtook me when I passed through; and I am going to take them to Miss Toosey; and if there is anything else nice you can suggest for that poor little soul, I 'll take it along with them."

Mrs. Rossitter was kind-hearted and liberal, and she promised to send one of the maids into Martel that afternoon with some invalid dainties; but John insisted on taking the grapes himself, and marched off with them after breakfast, regardless of the expostulations of his mother and Humphrey, who had other views for passing the morning.

As John Rossitter turned the corner into North Street he ran up against Mr. Ryder, and stopped to talk to him about the pheasant-shooting in the Rentmore coverts. "I am just going to ask for Miss Toosey," he said, as they were parting.

"Miss Toosey? Then you need not go any further; she died last night."

"Died!"

"Yes, poor old soul; and it was only a wonder that she lived so long."

John Rossitter turned and went on without another word, leaving the doctor staring after him in surprise. He went on to the house mechanically, and had knocked at the door before he recollected that there was no longer any object in his visit. Betty opened the door, with a red, swollen face, and burst out crying at sight of him, and threw her apron over her head in uncontrolled grief.

"All right," he said, "I know;" and passed by her and went into the little parlor, and sat down in the same chair that he had sat in the night before, and again involuntarily lifted the missionary-box in his hand. Presently Betty, having partly recovered herself, sidled into the room, glad of company in the "unked" quiet of the house. He asked no questions; and by and by she summoned courage to tell him how the quiet end came at midnight. "Miss Baker have been in this morning already, asking me no end of questions; and she were quite put out

with me because I had n't nothing to tell, and because Miss Toosey, poor dear! had n't said a lot of texes and fine things. She says, 'Was it a triumphal death?' says she. And I said as how I did n't know what that might be; and then she worrited to know what was the very last words as ever Miss Toosey said, and I did n't like for to tell her, but she would have it. You see, sir, the old lady said her prayers just as usual; and when I went in to see as she were all right on my way to bed, she says, 'I 'm pretty comfortable, Betty,' says she; 'good-night to you; and you 've not forgotten to give Sammy his supper?' — as is the cat, sir. And them 's the last words she uttered; for when I come in half-an-hour after, hearing her cough, I see the change was a-coming. But Miss Baker she did n't like it when I told her, though it were her own fault for asking; and she says, 'So she did n't testify to her faith,' says she. And I did n't know what she might mean, so I says, 'She were always good and kind to me and every one,' says I; and so she were," added Betty, touching unknowingly on a great truth; "and if that 's testifying to her faith, she 've adone it all her life."

And then she left him sitting there and musing on the quiet close of a quiet life, or rather the quiet passing into fuller life; for what is death but "an episode in life"? There was nothing grand or striking in Miss Toosey's death — there very rarely is; it is only now and then that there is a sunset glory over this life's evening; generally those around see only the seed sown in weakness and dishonor; generally when the glad summons comes, "Friend, come up higher," the happy soul rises up eager to obey, and leaves "the lower places" without giving those left behind even a glance of the brightness of the wedding garment, or a word of the fulness of joy in the Bridegroom's Presence.

And presently John Rossitter came away; and though he held the missionary-box thoughtfully in his hand, he put nothing into it. Had he forgotten his promise to Miss Toosey, which he said he regarded as a debt, to give something to her Mission?

. . . . . .

"And so there is an end of poor Miss Toosey and her Mission!" said Mr. Peters a few days later, as he met Mr. Glover returning from her funeral at the cemetery; and Mr.

Glover echoed the words with a superior, pitying smile: "So there is an end of poor Miss Toosey and her Mission!"

Poor Miss Toosey! Why do people so often use that expression about the happy dead? Surely they might find a more appropriate one for those who have left the sordid poverty of life behind them and have entered into so rich an inheritance! Of course they do not really mean that it was "an end of Miss Toosey," for did they not say every Sunday, "I believe in the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting"? and how could they call that an end which was only the beginning of new life? So this was only a figure of speech. But perhaps you will echo Mr. Glover's sigh over the end of her Mission, and regret that such zeal and ardor should have been wasted and produced no results. Wait a bit! There is no waste in nature, science teaches us; neither is there any in grace, says faith. We cannot always see the results, but they are there as surely in grace as in nature.

That same evening John Rossitter wrote to the Bishop of Nawaub, and very humbly and diffidently offered himself, his young life, his health and his strength, his talents and energies,

his younger son's portion, all that God had given him, for his Master's use; and the Bishop, who never ceased to pray "the Lord of the Harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest," "thanked God and took courage."

LADDIE.

By the Author of "Miss Toosey's Mission."

LADDIE.

CHAPTER I.

"THIRD-CLASS forward! Here you are, mum. Plenty of room this way! Now then! that ain't third, that 's first. Come, look alive! All right behind there?"

Doors bang; a whistle; and the train moves off.

The guard had thrust into a third-class carriage, already nearly full, a bandbox with a blue spotted handkerchief round it, and a bunch of Michaelmas daisies, southernwood, and rosemary tucked under the knot at the top; a marketing-basket, one flap of which was raised by a rosy-cheeked apple emitting a powerful smell; a bundle done up in a handkerchief of the same pattern as that round the bandbox, only bright yellow; a large cotton umbrella of a pale green color, with a decided waist to it; and a pair of

pattens! Anything else? Oh yes, of course! there was an old woman who belonged to the things; but she was so small and frightened and overwhelmed that she appeared quite a trifle beside her belongings, and might easily have been overlooked altogether. She remained just where the guard had pushed her, standing in the carriage, clutching as many of her things as she could keep hold of, and being jerked by the motion of the train, now against a burly bricklayer, and now against his red-faced wife who sat opposite; while her dazzled, blinking eyes followed the hedges and banks that whirled past, and her breath came with a catch and a gasp every time a bridge crossed the line, as if it were a wave coming over her. Her fellow-travellers watched her, in silence at first, having rather resented her entrance, as the carriage was already sufficiently full; but when a sudden lurch of the train sent her violently forward against a woman, from whom she cannoned off against the bricklayer, and flattened her drawn black-satin bonnet out of all shape, the man found his tongue, which was a kind one, though slow in moving.

"Hold hard, missus!" he said; "we don't pay nothing extra for sitting down, so maybe you

could stow some of them traps of yours under the seat, and make it kind of more comfortable all round. Here, mother, lend a hand with the old lady's things, can't you? That 's my missus, mum, that is, my better arf, as the saying is, and no chap need n't wish for a better, though I say it as should n't."

This remark produced a playful kick, and a "Get along with you!" from the red-faced wife, which did not show it was taken amiss, but that she was pleased with the delicate compliment, and she helped to arrange the various baskets and bundles with great energy and good-nature.

"Now that 's better, ain't it? Now you can just set yourself down. Lor' bless the woman! whatever is she frightened at?"

For the bustling arrangements were seriously alarming to the old woman, who was not sure that a sudden movement might not upset the train, or that, if she let go of anything in an unguarded moment, she might not fall out and be whirled off like those hurrying blackberry-bushes or patches of chalk on the embankment; though, indeed, it was only her pattens and umbrella that she was clutching as her one protection. The first thing that roused her from her daze of fear was the bricklayer's little boy beginning to cry,

or, as his mother called it, "to beller," in consequence of his mother's elbow coming sharply in contact with his head; and, at the sound, the old woman's hand let go of the umbrella and felt for the marketing-basket, and drew out one of the powerful, yellow apples, and held it out towards the sufferer. The "bellerin" stopped instantaneously at such a refreshing sight, even while the mouth was wide open and two tears forcing their way laboriously out of the eyes. Finding that she could accomplish this gymnastic feat without any dangerous results, the old woman seemed to gain more confidence, seated herself more comfortably, straightened her bonnet, smiled at the bricklayer, nodded to the little boy, and, by the time the train stopped at the next station, felt herself quite a bold and experienced traveller.

"This ain't London, I take it?" she asked, in a little, thin, chirrupy voice.

"London? bless you! no. If you 're bound for London you 'll have another five hours to go before you can get there."

"Oh yes, I know as it 's a terrible long way off, but we seemed coming along at such a pace as there was n't no knowing."

"You ain't used to travelling, seemings?"

"Oh! I 've been about as much as most folks. I 've been to Martel a smartish few times when Laddie was there, and once I went to Bristol when I was a gal keeping company with my master, but that ain't yesterday, you 'll be thinking."

"Martel 's a nice place, I 've heard tell?"

"So it be; but it 's a terrible big place, however."

"You 'll find London a pretty sight bigger."

"I know London pretty well, though I have n't never been there; for Laddie, he 's been up there nigh about fifteen year, and he 's told me a deal about it. I know as it 's all rubbish what folks say about the streets being paved with gold and such like, though the young folks do get took in; but Laddie, he says to me, 'Mother,' says he, 'London is paved with hard work like any other town; but,' he says, 'good honest work is worth it 's weight in gold any day;' so it 's something more than a joke after all."

The old woman grew garrulous as the train rushed along. Laddie was a subject, evidently, upon which her tongue could not help being eloquent.

"An old hen with one chick," the bricklayer whispered to his wife; but they listened good-

naturedly enough to the stories of the wonderful baby, who had been larger, fatter, and stronger than any baby before or since, who had taken notice, begun teething, felt his feet, run off, and said "daddy" at an incredibly early period.

Mrs. Bricklayer nodded her head and said, "Really now!" and "Well, I never!" inwardly, however, reserving her fixed opinion that the infant bricklayers had outdone the wonderful Laddie in every detail of babyhood.

Father Bricklayer could not restrain a mighty yawn in the middle of a prolonged description of how Laddie's gums were lanced; but at this juncture they reached the station which was the destination of the bricklayer and his family, so the old woman was not wounded by the discovery of their want of thorough interest, and she parted from them with great regret, feeling that she had lost some quite old friends in them. But she soon found another listener, and a more satisfactory one, in a young woman, whom she had hardly noticed before, as she sat in the opposite corner of the carriage with her head bent down, neither speaking nor being spoken to. She had a very young baby wrapped in her shawl; and as one by one the other passengers left the carriage and she was left alone with the

old woman, the two solitary creatures drew together in the chill November twilight; and, by and by, the wee baby was in the old woman's arms, and the young mother, almost a child herself, was telling her sad little story and hearing Laddie's story in return. There never had been such a son; he had got on so wonderfully at school, and had been a favorite with every one, — parson and schoolmaster; "such a headpiece the lad had!"

"Was Laddie his real name?"

"Why, no! he were christened John Clement, after his father and mine; but he called himself 'Laddie' before ever he could speak plain, and it stuck to him. His father was for making a schoolmaster of him, but Laddie he did n't take to that, so we sent him into Martel to the chemist there, to be shop-boy; and Mr. Stokes, the gentleman as keeps the shop, took to him wonderful, and spoke of him to one and another, saying how sharp he were, and such, till at last one of the doctors took him up and taught him a lot; and when he went up to London he offered to take Laddie, and said as he 'd take all the expense, and as he 'd make a man of him. He come to see me himself, he did, and talked me over, for I was a bit loath to let him

go, for 't was the year as the master died; he died just at fall and Laddie went at Christmas, and I was feeling a bit unked and lonesome."

"Were that long ago?"

"Yes; 't were a goodish time. Fifteen year come Christmas."

"But you 'll have seen him many a time since?"

"Well, no, I ain't. Many 's the time as he 's been coming down, but something always come between. Once he had fixed the very day and all, and then he were called off on business to Brighton or somewhere. That were a terrible disappointment to the boy; my heart were that sore for him as I nearly forgot how much I 'd been longing for it myself."

"But he 'll have wrote?"

"Bless you, yes! he 's a terrible one for his mother, he is. He 've not written so much of late maybe; but then folks is that busy in London they has n't the time to do things as we has in the country; but I 'll warrant he 've written to me every time he had a spare moment; and so when I sees old Giles the postman come up, and I says, 'Anything for me, master?' and he says 'Nothing for you to-day, mum' (for I were always respected in Sunnybrook from a girl

up), I thinks to myself, thinks I, 'it ain't for want of the will as my Laddie has n't wrote.' And then the presents as he 'd send me, bless his heart! Bank-notes it were at first, till he found as I just paid 'em into the bank and left 'em there; for what did I want with bank-notes? And then he sent me parcels of things, silk gownds fit for a duchess, and shawls all the colors of the rainbow, till I almost began to think he 'd forgot what sort of an old body I be. Just to think of the likes of me in such fine feathers! And there were flannel enough for a big family, and blankets; and then he sent tea and sugar, I don't know how many pounds of it; but it were good and no mistake, and I 'd like a cup of it now for you and me, my dear."

"And have he sent for you now to come and live with him?"

"No, he don't know nothing about it, and I mean to take him all by surprise. Old Master Heath, as my cottage belongs to, died this summer; and the man as took his farm wants my cottage for his shepherd, and he give me notice to quit. I felt it a bit and more, for I 'd been in that cottage thirty-five year, spring and fall, and I knows every crack and cranny about it, and I fretted terrible at first; but at last I says

to myself, 'Don't you go for to fret; go right off to Laddie, and he 'll make a home for you and glad;' and so I just stored my things away and come right off."

"He 've been doing well in London?"

"Well, my Laddie 's a gentleman! He 's a regular doctor, and keeps a carriage, and has a big house and servants. Mr. Mason, our parish doctor, says as he 's one of the first doctors in London, and that I may well be proud of him. Bless me! how pleased the boy will be to see his old mother! Maybe I shall see him walking in the streets, but if I don't I 'll find his house and creep in at the back door so as he sha'n't see me, and tell the gal to say to the doctor (doctor, indeed! my Laddie!) as some one wants to see him very particular. And then —" The old woman broke down here, half-sobbing, half-laughing, with an anticipation too tenderly, ecstatically sweet for words. "My dear," she said, as she wiped her brimming eyes, "I 've thought of it and dreamt of it so long, and to think as I should have lived to see it!"

The expectations of her travelling companion were far less bright, though she had youth to paint the future with bright hopes, and only nine-

teen winters to throw into the picture dark shadows of foreboding. She had been well brought up, and gone into comfortable service; and her life had run on in a quiet, happy course till she met with Harry Joyce.

"Folks says all manner of ill against him," said the girl's trembling voice; "but he were always good to me. I did n't know much about him, except as he liked me, and I liked him dearly; for he come from London at fair-time, and he stopped about the place doing odd jobs, and he come after me constant. My mistress were sore set against him, but I were pretty near mad about him; so we was married without letting any folks at home know nought about it. Oh, yes! we was married all right. I 've got my lines, as I could show you as there was n't no mistake about it; and it were all happy enough for a bit, and he got took on as ostler at the George; and there was n't a steadier, better-behaved young feller in the place. But, oh, dear! it did n't last long. He came in one day and said as how he 'd lost his place, and was going right off to London to get work there. I did n't say never a word, but I got up and begun to put our bits of things together; and then he says as he 'd best go first and find a place for

me, and I must go home to my mother. I thought it would have broke my heart, I did, to part with him; but he stuck to it, and I went home. Our village is nigh upon eight mile from Merrifield, and I'd never heard a word from mother since I wrote to tell them I was wed. When I got home that day, I almost thought as they'd have shut the door on me. A story had got about as I was n't married at all, and had brought shame and trouble on my folks; and my coming home like that made people talk all the more, though I showed them my lines and told my story truthful. Well, mother took me in, and I bided there till my baby was born; and she and father was good to me, I'll not say as they was n't; but they were always uneasy and suspicious-like about Harry; and I got sick of folks looking and whispering, as if I ought to be ashamed when I had nought to be ashamed of. And I wrote to Harry more than once to say as I'd rather come to him, if he'd a hole to put me in; and he always wrote to bid me bide a bit longer, till baby come; and then I just wrote and said I must come anyhow, and so set off. But, oh! I feel skeered to think of London, and Harry maybe not glad to see me."

It was dark by this time, and the women peering out could often only see the reflection of their own faces in the windows or ghostly puffs of smoke flitting past. Now and then, little points of light in the darkness told of homes where there were warm hearths and bright lights; and once, up above, a star showed, looking kindly and home-like to the old woman. "Every bit as if it were that very same star as comes out over the elm-tree by the pond, but that ain't likely all this way off."

But soon the clouds covered the friendly star, and a fine rain fell, splashing the windows with tiny drops, and making the lights outside blurred and hazy. And then the scattered lights drew closer together, and the houses formed into rows, and gas lamps marked out perspective lines; and then there were houses bordering the line on either side instead of banks and hedges; and then the train stopped, and a damp and steaming ticket-collector opened the door, letting in a puff of fog, and demanded the tickets, and was irritated to a great pitch of exasperation by the fumbling and slowness of the two women, who had put their tickets away in some place of extra safety and forgotten where that place was. And then in another minute the train was in Pad-

dington; gas and hurry and noise, porters, cabs, and shrieking engines, — a nightmare, indeed, to the dazzled country eyes and the deafened country ears.

CHAPTER II.

In a quiet, old-fashioned street near Portman Square there is a door with a brass plate upon it, bearing the name "Dr. Carter." The door is not singular in possessing a brass plate, for almost every house in the street displays one, being inhabited nearly entirely by doctors and musical professors. I do not attempt to explain why it is so, — whether that part of London is especially unhealthy, and so requires constant and varied medical advice, or whether there is something in the air conducive to harmony; or whether the musical professors attract the doctors, or the doctors the professors, I leave to more learned heads to discover, only hazarding the suggestion that perhaps the highly strung musical nerves may be an interesting study to the faculty, or that music may have charms to soothe the savage medical breast or drive away the evil spirits of the dissecting-room. Anyhow, the fact remains that North Crediton Street is the resort of doctors and musical men, and that on

one of the doors stands the plate of Dr. Carter.

It was an old-fashioned, substantially built house, built about the beginning of the last century, when people knew how to build solidly, if not beautifully. It had good thick walls, to which you might whisper a secret without confiding it to your next-door neighbor, and firm, well-laid floors, on which you might dance, if you had a mind to, without fear of descending suddenly into the basement. There were heavy frames to the windows, and small squares of glass, and wooden staircases with thick, twisted banisters, — a house, altogether, at which housemaids looked with contempt, as something infinitely less "genteel" than the "splendid mansions" of lath and plaster, paint and gilding, which are run up with such magic speed nowadays. We have no need to ring the bell and disturb the soft-voiced, deferential man-servant, out of livery, from the enjoyment of his evening paper in the pantry, for we can pass uninvited and unannounced into Dr. Carter's consulting-room, and take a look at it and him. There is nothing remarkable about the room: a book-case full of medical and scientific books; a large writing-table with pigeon-holes for papers and a

stethoscope on the top; a reading-lamp with a green shade, and an india-rubber tube to supply it with gas from the burner above; a side-table with more books and papers and a small galvanic battery; a large india-rubber plant in the window; framed photographs of eminent physicians and surgeons over the mantel-piece; a fire burning low in the grate; a thick Turkey carpet and heavy leather chairs; and there you have an inventory of the furniture, to arrange before your mind's eye if you think it worth while.

There *is* something remarkable in the man, John Clement Carter, M.D., but I cannot give you an inventory of him, or make a broker's list of eyes and forehead, nose and mouth. He is not a regularly handsome man, not one that a sculptor would model or an artist paint, but his is a face that you never forget if you have once seen it; there is something about him that makes people move out of his path involuntarily; and strangers ask, "Who is that?" Power is stamped in his deep-set eyes and the firm lines of mouth and chin, power which gives beauty even to an ugly thing, throwing a grandeur and dignity round a black, smoky engine, or a huge, ponderous steam-hammer. Indeed, power *is* beauty; for there is no real beauty in weakness,

physical or mental. His eyes had the beauty of many doctor's eyes, — kind and patient, from experience of human weakness and trouble of all sorts; keen and penetrating, as having looked through the mists of pain and disease, searching for hope, ay, and finding it too sometimes where other men could only find despair; brave and steady, as having met death constantly face to face; clear and good, as having looked through the glorious glass of science, and seen, more plainly the more he looked, the working of the Everlasting Arms; for surely when science brings confusion and doubt, it proves that the eye of the beholder is dim or distorted, or that he is too ignorant to use the glass rightly. But there is a different look in his eyes to-night; pain and trouble and weakness are far from his thoughts; and he is not gazing through the glass of science, though he has a *Medical Review* open before him, and a paper-knife in his hand to cut the leaves; his eyes have wandered to a bunch of Russian violets in a specimen glass on the table; and he is looking through rose-colored spectacles at a successful past, a satisfactory present, and a beautiful future.

I need not tell my readers that this Dr. John Clement Carter was the Somersetshire boy whom

good Dr. Savile had taken by the hand, and whose talents had made the ladder which carried him up to eminence. The kind old doctor liked to tell the story over a glass of port wine to the friends round his shining mahogany (he was old-fashioned, and thought scorn of claret and dinners *à la Russe*). "I was the making of the man," he would say; "and I 'm as proud of him, by Jove! sir, as if he were a son of my own."

It is quite as difficult to rise in the world gracefully as to come down; but every one agreed that John Carter managed to do it, and just from this reason, that there was no pretence about him. He did not obtrude his low origin on every one, forcing it on people's attention with that fidgety uneasiness which will have people know it if they are interested in the subject or not, which is only one remove from the unworthy pride that tries to hide it away altogether. Neither did he boast of it as something very much to his credit; but to any one who cared to know he would say, "My family were poor working people in Somersetshire, and I don't even know if I had a grandfather; and I owe everything to Dr. Savile." And he would say it with a smile and a quiet manner, as if it were nothing to be

ashamed of and nothing to be proud of, but just a fact which was hardly of interest; and his manner somehow made people feel that birth and breeding were after all mere insignificant circumstances of life, and of no account by the side of talent and success. "He 's a good fellow, John Carter, and a clever fellow too, without any humbug about him," the men said; and the women thought much the same, though they expressed it differently. Indeed, the glimpse of his early humble country life, so simply given, without any pretence or concealment, grew to be considered an effective, picturesque background which showed up to advantage his present success and dignified position. It was quite true that there was no humbug or concealment about him; that was the very truth he told; and yet, somehow, as time went on, the words lost the full meaning they had to him at first. Don't you know, if you use the same words frequently they get almost mechanical; even in our prayers, alas! they are no longer the expression of our feeling, but the words come first and the feeling follows. or does not follow. And then, don't you know sometimes how we hear with other people's ears, and see with other people's eyes? And so John Carter, when he

said those simple, truthful words, grew to see the picturesque background, — the thatched cottage, and the honeysuckle-covered porch, and the grand old patriarch with white hair, one of nature's noblemen, leaning on his staff and blessing his son; and he gradually forgot the pig-sty close to the cottage door, and father in a dirty green smock and hob-nailed boots, doing what he called "mucking it out," and stopping to wipe the heat from his brow with a snuffy, red cotton handkerchief.

But come back from the pig-sty to the violets which are scenting the consulting-room, and luring Dr. Carter, not unwillingly, from the *Medical Review* to thoughts of the giver. Her name is Violet too, and so are her eyes, though the long lashes throw such a shadow that you might fancy they were black themselves. It is not every one — indeed, it is John Carter alone — who is privileged to look straight down into those eyes, and see the beauty of their color; only he, poor, foolish fellow, forgets to take advantage of his opportunity, and only notices the great love for him that shines there and turns his brain with happiness. His hand trembles as he stretches it to take the specimen glass; and the cool, fragrant flowers lightly touch his lip as he raises them

to his face. "Pshaw!" I hear you say, reminding me of my own words, "there is no beauty in weakness, and this is weakness indeed! — a sensible man, past the hey-day and folly of youth, growing maudlin and sentimental over a bunch of violets!" No, reader, it is power, — the strongest power on earth, — the power of love.

He had been used to say that his profession was his lady-love, and he had looked on with wondering, incredulous eyes at the follies and excesses of young lovers; he was inclined to think it was a mild form of mania, and required physical treatment. And so he reached five-and-thirty unscathed, and slightly contemptuous of others less fortunate than himself; when, one day, a girl's blue eyes, looking shyly at him through dark lashes, brought him down once and forever from his pedestal of fancied superiority; and before he could collect his arguments, or reason himself out of it, he was past cure, hopelessly, helplessly, foolishly in love. They had been engaged for two days; it was two days since this clever young doctor, this rising, successful man, with such stores of learning, such a solid intellect, such a cool, calm brain, had stood blushing and stammering before a girl of eighteen. If I were to write down the words he

said, you would think my hero an idiot pure and simple; the most mawkish and feeble twaddle of the most debased of penny periodicals was vastly superior to what Dr. Carter stammered out that day. But is not this generally the case? Beautiful, poetical love-scenes are frequent in plays and books, but very rare in real life. There is not one love-scene in a thousand that would bear being taken down in short-hand, printed in plain, black type, and read by critical eyes through commonplace spectacles. Nevertheless, the feelings are no doubt sublime, though the words may be ridiculous. He was quite another man altogether (happily for him) when he went to Sir John Meredith, and told him plainly that he was no match for his daughter as far as birth went.

"My good fellow," the sensible little baronet answered, "there are only about ten families in England that can put their pedigree by the side of the Merediths, and it don't seem to me to make much difference, if you rise from the ranks yourself, or if your father, or grandfather did it."

"I can scarcely claim even to be a gentleman," the young man went on, feeling pretty sure of success by that time.

"Not another word, my dear boy; not another word! I respect your candor, and I esteem you very highly as an honest man, — the noblest work of God, you know, eh? — though I 'd like to hear any one say that you were not a gentleman as well. There, go along! shake hands! God bless you! You 'll find Violet in the drawing-room. Sly little puss! but I saw what was coming — and mind you dine with us this evening at seven sharp — old-fashioned folk, old-fashioned hours."

I think the wary baronet also respected Dr. Carter's income, and esteemed very highly his success, and having weighed the advantages of family and birth against success and income, had found that the latter were the more substantial in the worldly scales.

And so Dr. Carter was dreaming rosy dreams that evening in his quiet room, as was fit and proper after two days' wandering in fairyland with Violet Meredith. But as the scent of the violets had led him to think of the giver, so it drew his thoughts away from her again back to spring-time many years ago at Sunnybrook, and the bank where the earliest violets grew in the sheltered lane leading to the Croft Farm. Did ever violets smell so sweet as those? He remembered

one afternoon, after school, going to fetch the milk from the farm, and the scent luring him across the little runlet by the side of the path, which was swollen into a small, brawling brook by the lately thawed snow. He set down the can safely before he made the venture; and Dr. Carter laughed softly to himself to think how short and fat the legs were that found the little stream such a mighty stride. He was busy diving for the flowers among the layers of dead elm-leaves, which the blustering autumn winds had blown there, when a sound behind him caused him to look round, and there was the can upset, and the young foxhound quartered at the Croft licking up the white pool from the pebbles. In his anger and fear and haste, he slipped as he tried to jump back, and went full length into the stream, and scrambled out in a sad plight, and went home crying bitterly, with a very wet pinafore, and dirty face, and empty milk-can, with the cause of his mishap, the sweet violets, still clasped unconsciously in his little scratched hand. And his mother — ah! she was always a good mother! He could remember still the comforting feeling of mother's apron wiping away dirt and tears, and the sound of her voice bidding him "Never mind! and hush up like a good

little Laddie." His heart felt very warm just then towards that mother of his; and he made up his mind that, cost what trouble it might, he would go down and see her before he was married, if it were only for an hour or two, just to make sure that she was comfortable, and not working about and wearing herself out. His conscience pricked him a little at the thought of what a pleasure the sight of him would have been to the old woman, and how year after year had slipped away without his going down. But still a comforting voice told him that he had been substantially a good son, and it was accident and not intention that had kept him away. "Anyhow," he said to himself, "another month shall not pass without my seeing my mother."

At this moment the deferential man knocked at the door and aroused Dr. Carter to the consciousness of how far his wandering thoughts had carried him from his consulting-room and *Medical Review*.

"What is it, Hyder?"

"Please, sir, there 's some one wishes to see you. I told her as it was too late, and you was engaged very particular, but she would n't be put off nohow, sir."

"What is her name?"

There was a slight smile disturbing the usually unruffled serenity of Mr. Hyder's face, as if he had a lingering remembrance of something amusing.

"She didn't give no name, sir, and she wouldn't say what she wanted, though I asked it a message wouldn't do; but she said her business was too particular for that, sir."

"What sort of person is she?"

The corners of the man's mouth twitched, and he had to give a little cough to conceal an incipient chuckle.

"Beg your pardon, sir. She appears to be from the country, sir. Quite a countrified, homely old body, sir."

Perhaps the odor of the violets and the country memories they had called up made him more amiably inclined; but instead of the sharp, decided refusal the servant expected, "Tell her it is long past my time for seeing patients, and I am busy, and she must call again to-morrow," he said, "Well, show her in;" and the man withdrew in surprise.

"Countrified, homely old body." Somehow the description brought back to his mind his mother coming down the brick path from the door at home, with her Sunday bonnet on, and

her pattens in her hand, and the heavy-headed double stocks and columbines tapping against her short petticoats. The doctor smiled to himself; and even while he smiled the door was pushed open, and before him he saw, with a background of the gas-lit hall and the respectful Hyder, by this time developed into an uncontrollable grin, his mother, in her Sunday bonnet and with her pattens in her hand.

CHAPTER III.

READER, think of some lovely picture of rustic life, with tender lights and pleasant shadows, with hard lines softened, and sharp angles touched into gentle curves, with a background of picturesque, satisfying appropriateness, with the magic touches that bring out the beauty and refinement and elegance of the scene, which are really there, and that subtly tone down all the roughness and awkwardness and coarseness, which are also equally there. And then, imagine it, if you can, changing under your very eyes, with glaring lights and heavy shadows deepening and sharpening and hardening wrinkles and angles and lines, exaggerating defects, bringing coarseness and age and ugliness into painful prominence, and taking away at a sweep the pretty, rural background which might have relieved and soothed the eye, and putting a dull, commonplace, incongruous one in its place. It was something of this sort that happened to John Carter that night, when the picture he had

been painting with the sweet lights of love and childhood's fancies, and the tender shadows of memory throwing over it all soft tones of long ago and far away, suddenly stood before him in unvarnished reality, with all the glamor taken away, an every-day fact in his present London life.

I am glad to write it of him, that, for the first minute, pleasure was the uppermost feeling in his mind. First thoughts are often the best and purest. He started up, saying, "Mother! why, mother!" in the same tone of glad surprise as he would have done fifteen years before if she had come unexpectedly into the shop at Martel; he did not even think if the door were closed, or what Mr. Hyder would think; he did not notice that she was crumpled and dirty with travel, or that she put her pattens down on his open book and upset the glass of violets; he just took hold of her trembling, hard-worked hands, and kissed her furrowed old cheek, wet with tears of unutterable joy, and repeated, "Mother! why, mother!"

I am glad to write it of him; glad that she had that great happiness, realizing the hopes and longings of years past, consoling in days to come when she had to turn back to the past for

comfort, or forward to the time of perfect satisfaction. There are these exquisite moments in life, let people say what they will of the disappointments and vanity of the world, when hope is realized, desire fulfilled; but it is just for a moment, no more, — just a foretaste of the joys that shall be hereafter, when every moment of the long years of eternity will be still more full and perfect, when we shall "wake up" and "be satisfied."

She was clinging meanwhile to his arm, sobbing out, "Laddie my boy, Laddie!" with her eyes too dim with tears to see his face clearly, or to notice how tall and grand and handsome her boy was grown, and what a gentleman. Presently, when she was seated in the arm-chair, and had got her breath again, and wiped her foolish old eyes, she was able to hunt in her capacious pocket for the silver-rimmed spectacles that had descended from her father, old Master Pullen in the almshouse, and that Laddie remembered well, as being kept in the old Family Bible, and brought out with great pomp and ceremony on Sunday evenings.

"I must have a good look at you, Laddie boy," she said.

And then I think her good angel must have spread his soft wing between the mother and

son (though to her mind it seemed only like another tear dimming her sight, with a rainbow light on it), to keep her from seeing the look that was marring that son's face. All the pleasure was gone, and embarrassment and disquiet had taken its place.

"However did you come, mother?" he said, trying his best to keep a certain hardness and irritation out of his voice.

"I come by the train, dear," the old woman answered; "and it did terrify me more nor a bit at first, I 'll not go for to deny; but, bless you! I soon got over it, and them trains is handy sort of things when you gets used to 'em. I was a good deal put to though when we got to London station, there seemed such a many folks about, and they did push and hurry a body so. I don't know whatever I should adone if a gentleman had n't come and asked me where I wanted to get to. He were a tallish man with whiskers, a bit like Mr. Jones over at Martel, and I daresay you knows him; but he were terrible kind however."

John Carter did not stop to explain that there were many tallish men with whiskers in London.

"Why did n't you write and say you were coming?"

"Well, there! I thought as I'd give you a surprise; and I knew as you 'd be worrying about the journey and thinking as I 'd not be able to manage; but I 'm not such a helpless old body, after all, Laddie."

"Who have you left in charge of the cottage?"

"Why, I 've give it up altogether. Farmer Harris, he wanted it for his shepherd, and he give me notice. That 's why I come all on a sudden like. I says to myself, says I, Laddie" got a home and a welcome for his old mother, and it 's only because he thought as I was pretty nearly growed to the old place, and could n't abear to leave it, that he ain't said as I must come and keep house for him long ago. But, bless you! I 've been thinking so of the pleasure of seeing you again that I 've pretty nearly forgot as I was leaving my master's grave and all."

"And when must you go back?"

"Not till you gets tired of me, Laddie, or till you takes me to lay me by the old master; for I 'd like to lay there, if so be as you can manage it, for I 've heard tell as it costs a mort of money buryin' folks out of the parish as they dies in, and maybe it might n't be just convenient to you."

John Carter busied himself with making the fire burn up into a blaze, while his mother rambled on, telling him little bits of village gossip about people he had long since forgotten or never heard of; or describing her journey, which was a far greater exploit in the old woman's eyes than Lieutenant Cameron's walk across Africa; or dwelling on the delight of seeing him again. He paid little heed to what she said, pretending to be intent on placing a refractory piece of coal in a certain position, or coaxing an uncertain little flame into steadiness; but his head was busy trying to form some plan for getting himself out of his difficult position. He did not want to hurt her, or to be unkind in any way; but it was altogether out of the question having her there to live with him. It would ruin all his prospects in life, his position in his profession and in society; as to his engagement, he did not venture to allow himself even to think of Violet just then. He knew some doctors whose mothers lived with them, and kept house for them, received their guests, and sat at the head of their table, but they were ladies, very different. The very idea of his mother with three or four servants under her was an absurdty. And this thought brought Hyder's grin

before his mind. What had happened when his mother arrived? Had she committed herself and him frightfully by her behavior? No doubt that impudent rascal was giving a highly facetious account of it all to the maids in the kitchen. Chattering magpies! And how they would pass it on! How Mary Jane would describe it through the area gate to the milk-woman next morning, and cook add a pointed word or two from the front steps as she cleaned them! He could almost smell the wet hearth-stone and hear the clinking of the tin milk-pails as Biddy hooked them to the yoke and passed on with the story of his degradation. And he could fancy what a choice morsel it would make for Hyder to tell Sir John Meredith's solemn, red-nosed butler, behind his hand, in a hoarse whisper, with winks to emphasize strong points, and an occasional jerk of the thumb over the shoulder and a careful avoidance of names. This thought was too much for his feelings, and the tongs went down with an ominous clatter into the fender, making the old woman jump nearly off her chair, and cutting short a story about the distemper among Squire Wellow's pigs.

"There; it brought my heart into my mouth pretty near, and set me all of a tremble. I

reckon as I 'm a little bit tired, and it have shook up my nerves like, and a little do terrify one so."

The sight of her white, trembling old face touched his son's and doctor's heart under the fine, closely woven, well-cut coat of fine gentlemanliness and worldly wisdom which he was buttoning so closely round him.

"You are quite tired out, mother," he said; "you shall have some tea and go to bed. I can't have you laid up, you know."

"There now! if I was n't thinking as a dish of tea would be the nicest thing in the world! and for you to think of it! Ah! you remembers what your mother likes, bless you!"

In that moment he had quickly made up his mind that at any rate it was too late for that night to do anything but just make her comfortable; to-morrow something must be done without delay; but there was ten striking, and she was evidently quite worn out. He must say something to silence those jays of servants, and get her off to bed, and then he could sit down and arrange his plans quietly; for the suddenness of the emergency had confused and muddled him.

"I 'll tell them to get some tea," he said, "you sit still and rest." And then he rang the bell

decidedly and went out into the hall, closing the doors behind him. He had never felt so self-conscious and uncomfortable as when the man-servant came up the kitchen stairs and stood as deferentially as ever before him. He felt as if he had not got entire control of voice, eyes, or hands. His eyes seemed to avoid looking at the man's face in spite of him, and his voice tried hard to be apologetic and entreating of its own accord. That would never do. He thrust his obtrusive hands into his pockets, and drew up his head, and looked sharply at the man straight in the eyes with a "fight you for *2d.*" expression, or "every bit as if I owed him a quarter's rent," as Hyder said afterwards; and he spoke in a commanding, bullying tone, very unlike his usual courteous behavior to servants, imagining that by this he conveyed to the man's mind that he was quite at his ease, and that nothing unusual had happened.

"Look here," he said, "I want tea at once in the dining-room, and tell Cook to send up some cold meat. I suppose it 's too late for cutlets or anything like that?"

"Is the lady going to stop the night, sir?"

The words stung Dr. Carter so, that he would have liked to have kicked the man down

the kitchen stairs, but he luckily restrained himself.

"Yes, she is. The best bed-room must be got ready, and a fire lighted, and everything made as comfortable as possible. Do you hear?"

"Yes, sir." The man hesitated a second to see if there were any further orders, and Dr. Carter half turned, looking another way, as he added, "She is a very old friend and nurse of mine when I was a child, and I want her to be made comfortable. She will only be here this one night."

He felt as he turned the handle of the consulting-room door that he had really done it rather well on the whole, and carried it off with a high hand. and not told any falsehood after all, for was she not his oldest friend and his most natural nurse? In reality he had never looked less like a gentleman, and Hyder saw it too.

They say a man is never a hero to his own valet. I do not know if this includes men-servants in general; but certain it is that, up to this time, Dr. Carter had kept the respect of his servant. "I know as he ain't a swell," Mr. Hyder would say to the coterie of footmen who met in the bar of the snug little "public" round the corner; "but for all that he ain't a bad master

neither; and as far as my experience serves, he's as good a gent as any of them, and better any day than them dandy, half-pay captings as locks up their wine and cigars, and sells their old clothes, and keeps their men on scraps, and cusses and swears as if they was made of nothing else."

But as Hyder went to his pantry that night, he shook his head with a face of supreme disgust. "That's what I call nasty!" he said: "I'm disappointed in that man. I thought better of him than this comes to. Well, well! blood tells after all. What's bred in the bone will come out in the flesh sooner or later. Nurse indeed! Get along! you don't humbug me, my gent!"

There were no signs, however, of these moralizings in the pantry, or the fuller discussion that followed in the kitchen, when he announced that supper was ready.

"Do ye have your victuals in the kitchen now, Laddie?" the old woman said. "Well, there! it is the most comfortable to my thinking, though gentle-folks do live in their best parlors constant."

Hyder discreetly drew back, and Dr. Carter whispered with a crimson flush all over his face, "Hush, we'll have our talk when this fellow is out of the way. Don't say anything till then."

The old woman looked much surprised, but at last concluded that there was something mysterious against the character of "the very civil-spoken young man as opened the door," and so she kept silence while her son led her into the dining-room, where tea was spread, with what appeared to the old woman royal magnificence of white damask and shining silver.

"You can go," the doctor said. "I will ring if we want anything."

"He don't look such a baddish sort of young man," she said, when the door closed behind the observant Hyder; "and he seems to mind what you says pretty sharp. I thought as he was a gent hisself when he opened the door, as he had n't got red breeches or gaiters or nothing; but I suppose you will put him into livery by and by?"

"Now, mother, you must have some tea. And you are not to talk till you have eaten something. Here! I 'll pour out the tea." For the glories of the silver tea-pot were drawing her attention from its reviving contents. "I hope they have made it good. Ah! I remember well what tea you used to make in that little brown tea-pot at home." It was very easy and pleasant to be kind to her, and make much of her now, when

no one else was there. He enjoyed waiting on her, and seeing her brighten up and revive under the combined influence of food and warmth and kindness. He liked to hear her admire and wonder at everything, and he laughed naturally and boyishly at her odd little innocent remarks. If they two could have been always alone together, with no spying eyes and spiteful tongues, it would have been all right and pleasant, but as it was, it was quite impossible, and out of the question.

"It ain't the tea-pot, Laddie, as does it. It 's just to let it stand till it 's drawed thorough and no longer. Put it on the hob for ten minutes, say I, but that 's enough. I don't like stewed tea, and moreover it ain't wholesome neither. This *is* a fine room, Laddie, and no mistake. Why, the parson ain't got one to hold a candle to it. I 'd just like some of the Sunnybrook folk to have a look at it. It would make them open their eyes wide, I warrant! — to see me a-setting here like a lady, with this here carpet as soft as anything, and them curtains, and pictures, and all! I wonder whatever they would say if they could see? I suppose now, as there 's a washus or a place out behind somewheres for them servants?"

Dr. Carter laughed at the idea of Mrs. Treasure the cook, and the two smart housemaids, let alone Mr. Hyder, being consigned to a wash-house at the back; and he explained the basement arrangements.

"Underground. Well! I never did! But I think I 've heard tell of underground kitchens before, but I never would believe it. It must be terrible dark for the poor things, and damp moreover; and how poor, silly gals is always worriting to get places in London, passes me!"

Presently, when they had done tea, and gone back into the consulting-room, when the old woman was seated in the arm-chair, with her feet on the fender, and her gown turned up over her knees, Dr. Carter drew his chair up near hers, and prepared for his difficult task.

"Mother," he said, laying one of his hands caressingly on her arm (he was proud of his hands, — it was one of his weaknesses that they were gentleman's hands, white and well shaped, and there was a plain gold strap-ring on the little finger, which hit exactly the right medium between severity and display, as a gentleman's ring should), — "Mother, I wish you had written to tell me you were coming."

She took his hand between both her own, hard and horny, with the veins standing up like cord on the backs, rough and misshapen with years of hard work, but with a world of tender mother's love in every touch, that made his words stick in his throat and nearly choke him.

"I knew as you 'd be pleased to see me, Laddie, come when I might or how I might."

"Of course I 'm glad to see you, mother, very glad; and I was thinking just before you came in that I would run down to Sunnybrook to see you just before Christmas."

And then he went on to explain how different London life was to that at Sunnybrook, and how she would never get used to it or feel happy there, talking quickly and wrapping up his meaning in so many words and elaborations that at the end of half an hour the old woman had no more idea of what he meant than she had at the beginning, and was fairly mystified. She had a strange way, too, of upsetting all his skilful arguments with a simple word or two.

"Different from Sunnybrook? Yes, sure; but she 'd get used to it like other folks. Not happy? Why she 'd be happy anywheres with her Laddie. There, don't you fret yourself

about me ; as long as you 're comfortable I don't mind nothing."

How could he make her understand and see the gulf that lay between them, — her life and his? It needed much plainer speaking ; a spade must be called a spade ; and, somehow, it looked a very much more ugly spade when it was so called. How soon did she catch his meaning? He hardly knew, for he could not bear to look into her face, and see the smile fade from her lips and the brightness from her eyes. He only felt her hand suddenly clasp his more tightly, as if he had tried to draw it away from her ; and she grew silent, while he talked on quickly and nervously, telling her they would go together to-morrow and find a little snug cottage not far from London, with everything pretty and comfortable that heart could wish for, and a little maid to do the work, so that she need never lay her hand to anything ; and how he would come to see her often, very often, perhaps once a week. Still never a word for or against, of pleasure or of pain, till he said, —

"You would like it, mother, would n't you?"

And then she answered slowly and faintly, —

"I 'm aweary, Laddie, too tired like for new plans ; and maybe, dearie, too old."

"You must go to bed," he said, with a burst of overwhelming compunction. "I ought not to have let you stop up like this. I should have kept what I had to say till to-morrow when you were rested. Come, think no more of it to-night, everything will look brighter to-morrow. I 'll show you your bedroom."

And so he took her upstairs, such a lot of stairs to the old country legs; but her curiosity overcame her fatigue sufficiently to make her peep into the double drawing-room where the gas-lamp in the street threw weird lights and shadows on the ceiling, and touched unexpectedly on parts of mirrors or gilded cornices, giving a mysterious effect to the groups of furniture and the chandelier hanging in its holland covering.

"'T is mighty fine!" she said, "but an unked place to my mind; like a churchyard somat."

Her bed-room did not look "unked," however, with a bright fire burning, and the inviting chintz-curtained bed and the crisp muslin-covered toilet-table, with two candles lighted. In the large looking-glass on the toilet-table the figure of the little old woman was reflected among the elegant comfort of the room, looking all the more small and shabby and old,

and out of place in contrast with her surroundings.

"Now make haste to bed, there 's a good old mother; my room is next to this if you want anything, and I shall soon come up to bed. I hope you 'll be very comfortable. Good-night."

And then he left her with a kiss; and she stood for some minutes quite still, looking at the scene reflected in the glass before her, peering curiously and attentively at it.

"And so Laddie is ashamed of his old mother," she said softly, with a little sigh; "and it ain't no wonder!"

As Dr. Carter sat down again in his consulting-room by himself, he told himself that he had done wisely, though he had felt and inflicted pain, and still felt very sore and ruffled. But it was wisest, and practically kindest and best for her in the end, more surely for her happiness and comfort; so there was no need to regret it, or for that tiresome little feeling in one corner of his heart that seemed almost like remorse. This is no story-book world of chivalry, romance, and poetry; and to get on in it you must just lay aside sentimental fancies and act by the light of reason and common sense. And then he settled

down to arrange the details of to-morrow's plans, and jotted down on a piece of paper a few memoranda of suitable places, times of trains, etc., and resolved that he would spare no pains or expense in making her thoroughly comfortable. He even wrote a note or two to put off some appointments, and felt quite gratified with the idea that he was sacrificing something on his mother's account. The clock struck two as he rose to go up to bed; and he went up feeling much more composed and satisfied with himself, having pretty successfully argued and reasoned down his troublesome, morbid misgivings. He listened at his mother's door, but all was quiet; and he made haste into bed himself, feeling he had gone through a good deal that day.

He was just turning over to sleep when his door opened softly, and his mother came in,— such a queer, funny, old figure, with a shawl wrapped round her and a very large nightcap on, — one of the old-fashioned sort, with very broad, flapping frills. She had a candle in her hand, and set it down on the table by his bed. He jumped up as she came in.

"Why, mother, what's the matter? Not in bed? Are you ill?"

"There, there! lie down · there ain't noth-

ing wrong. But I 've been listening for ye this long time. 'T is fifteen year and more since I tucked you up in bed, and you used to say as you never slept so sweet when I did n't do it."

She made him lie down, and smoothed his pillow, and brushed his hair off his forehead, and tucked the clothes round him, and kissed him as she spoke.

"And I thought as I 'd like to do it for you once more. Good-night, Laddie, good-night."

And then she went away quickly, and did not hear him call, "Mother! O mother!" after her; for the carefully tucked-in clothes were flung off, and Laddie was out of bed with his hand on the handle of the door, and then, — second thoughts being cooler, if not better, — "She had better sleep," Dr. Carter said, and got back into bed.

But sleep did not come at his call. He tossed about feverishly and restlessly, with his mind tossing hither and thither as much as his body, the strong wind of his pride and will blowing against the running tide of his love and conscience, and making a rough sea between them, which would not allow of any repose. And which of them was the strongest? After long and fierce debate with himself, he came to a conclusion which at

all events brought peace along with it. "Come what may," he said, "I will keep my mother with me, let people say or think what they will, — even if it costs me Violet herself, as most likely it will. I can't turn my mother out in her old age, so there's an end of it." And there and then he went to sleep.

It must have been soon after this that he woke with a start, with a sound in his ears like the shutting of the street-door. It was still quite dark, night to Londoners, morning to country people, who were already going to their work and labor; and Dr. Carter turned himself over and went to sleep again, saying, "It was my fancy or a dream;" while his old mother stood shivering in the cold November morning outside his door, murmuring, —

"I 'll never be a shame to my boy, my Laddie; God bless him!"

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN Dr. Carter opened his door next morning, he found his mother's room empty, and it seemed almost as if the events of the night before had been a bad dream; only the basket of apples, and the bandbox, still tied up in the spotted handkerchief, confirmed his recollections; and when he went down, the pattens, still on his writing-table, added their testimony. But where was his mother? All the servants could tell him was that they had found her bedroom door open when they came down in the morning, and the front door unbarred and unbolted, and that was all.

"She has gone back to Sunnybrook," he said to himself, with a very sore heart. "She saw what a miserable, base-hearted cur of a son she had, who grudged a welcome and a shelter to her who would have given her right hand to keep my little finger from aching. God forgive me for wounding the brave old heart! I will go and bring her back. She will be ready to forgive me nearly before I speak."

He looked at the train paper, and found there was an early, slow train by which his mother must have gone, and an express that would start in about an hour, and reach Martel only a quarter of an hour after the slower one. This just gave him time to make arrangements for his engagements, and write a line to Violet, saying he was unexpectedly called away from London, but that he would come to her immediately on his return, for he had much to tell and explain. The cab was at the door to take him to the station, and everything was ready, and he was giving his last directions to Mr. Hyder.

"I shall be back to-morrow, Hyder, without fail, and I shall bring my mother with me." He brought out the word even now with an effort, and hated himself for the flush that came up into his face; but he went on firmly, "That was my mother who was here last night, and no man ever had a better."

I don't know how it happened, but everything seemed topsy-turvey that morning; for all at once Dr. Carter found himself shaking hands with Hyder before he knew what he was about; and the deferential, polite Hyder, whose respect had always been slightly tinged with contempt, was saying, with tears in his eyes,

"Indeed, sir, I see that all along; and I don't think none the worse of you, but a deal the better, for saying it out like a man; and me and cook and the gals will do our best to make the old lady comfortable, that we will!"

Dr. Carter felt a strange, dream-like feeling as he got into the cab. Every one and everything seemed changed, and he could not make it out; even Hyder seemed something more than an excellent servant. It was quite a relief to his mind, on his return next day, to find Hyder the same imperturbable person as before, and the little episode of hand-shaking and expressed sympathy not become a confirmed habit. It was a trifling relief even in the midst of his anxiety and disappointment; for he did not find his mother at Sunnybrook, nor did she arrive by either of the trains that followed the one he came by, though he waited the arrival of several at Martel. So he came back to London, feeling that he had gone on the wrong tack, but comforting himself with the thought that he would soon be able to trace her out wherever she had gone. But it was not so easy as he expected; the most artful and experienced criminal, escaping from justice, could not have gone to work more skilfully than the old woman

did quite unconsciously. All his inquiries were fruitless; she had not been seen or noticed at Paddington, none of the houses or shops about had been open or astir at that early morning hour. Once he thought he had a clew, but it came to nothing; and, tired and dispirited, he was obliged, very unwillingly, to put the matter into the hands of the police, who undertook with great confidence to find the old woman before another day was past.

It was with a very haggard, anxious face that he came into the pretty drawing-room in Harley Street, where Violet sprang up from her low chair by the fire, to meet him. How pretty she was! how sweet! how elegant and graceful every movement and look, every detail of her dress! His eyes took in every beauty lovingly, as one who looks his last on something dearer than life, and then lost all consciousness of any other beauty, in the surpassing beauty of the love for him in her eyes. She stretched out both her soft hands to him, with the ring he had given her the only ornament on them, and said, "Tell me about it."

Do not you know some voices that have a caress in every word and a comfort in every tone? Violet Meredith's was such a voice.

"I have come for that," he said; and he would not trust himself to take those hands in his, or to look any longer into her face; but he went to the fire and looked into the red caves among the glowing coals. "I have come to tell you about my mother. I have deceived you shamefully."

And then he told her of his mother, describing her as plainly and carefully as he could, trying to set aside everything fanciful or picturesque, and yet do justice to the kind, simple, old heart, trying to make Violet see the great difference between the old countrywoman and herself. And then he told her of her having come to him, to end her days under her son's roof. "I could not ask you to live with her," he ended sadly.

She had clasped her hands round his arm shyly, for it was only a few days since she had had to hide away her love, like a stolen treasure, out of sight.

"It is too late to think of that," she said, with a little coaxing laugh; "too late, for you asked me to be your wife a week ago. Yes, John," — the name came still with a little hesitation, — "a whole week ago, and I will not let you off. And then I have no mother of my own; she

died before I can remember; and it will be so nice to have one, for she will like me for your sake, won't she? And what does it matter what she is like, you silly old John? — she is your mother, and that is quite enough for me. And don't you think I love you more ridiculously than ever because you are so good and noble and true to your old mother, and are not ashamed of her because she is not just exactly like other people?" And she laid her soft cheek against his sleeve, by her clasped hands, as she spoke.

But he drew away with almost a shudder. "Love me less, then, Violet; hate me, for I *was* ashamed of her; I was base and cowardly and untrue, and I wanted to get her out of the way so that no one should know, not even you, and I hurt and wounded her, — her who would have done anything for her 'Laddie,' as she calls me, — and she went away disappointed and sad and sorry, and I cannot find her."

He had sunk down into Violet's low chair, and covered up his face with his hands, and through the fingers forced their way the hot, burning tears, while he told of his ineffectual efforts to find her, and his shame and regret.

She stood listening, too pitiful and sorry for

words, longing to comfort him; and at last she knelt down and pulled his hands gently away from his face, and whispered very softly, as if he might not like to hear her use his mother's name for him, "We will find her, never fear; your mother and mine, Laddie." And so she comforted him.

What an awful place London is! I do not mean awful in the sense in which the word is used by fashionable young ladies, or schoolboys, by whom it is applied indiscriminately to a "lark" or a "bore," into which two classes most events in life may, according to them, be divided, and considered equally descriptive of sudden death or a new bonnet. I use it in its real meaning, full of awe, inspiring fear and reverence, as Jacob said, "How dreadful is this place," — this great London, with its millions of souls, with its strange contrasts of riches and poverty, business and pleasure, learning and ignorance, and the sin everywhere. Awful indeed! and the thought would be overwhelming in its awfulness if we could not say also as Jacob did, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not;" if we did not know that there is the ladder set up, reaching to Heaven, and the angels of God ever ascending and descending; if

we did not believe that the Lord stands above it. It seemed a very terrible place to the old countrywoman as she wandered about its streets and squares, its parks and alleys, that November day, too dazed and stupefied to form any plan for herself, only longing to get out of sight, that she might not shame her boy. She felt no bitterness against him; for was it not natural when he was a gentleman, and she a poor, homely old body?

In the early morning, when the streets were empty, except for policemen or late revellers hurrying home, or market-carts coming in from the country, with frosty moisture on the heaps of cabbages, she got on pretty well. She had a cup of coffee at an early coffee-stall, and no one took any notice of her; some of those that passed were country people too; and at that early hour people are used to see odd, out-of-the-way figures, that would be stared at in the height of noon. But as the day went on, the streets filled with hurrying people, and the shops opened, and omnibuses and cabs began to run, and she got into more bustling, noisy thoroughfares, and was hustled and pushed about and looked at, the terrors of the situation came heavily upon her. She tried to encourage herself with the thought

that before long she should get out of London and reach the country, little knowing, poor old soul, how many miles of streets and houses and pavements lay between her and the merest pretence to real country. And then, too, in that maze of streets where one seemed exactly like another, her course was of a most devious character, often describing a circle and bringing her back through the same streets without the old woman knowing that she was retracing her steps; sometimes a difficult crossing, with an apparently endless succession of omnibuses and carts, turned her from her way; sometimes a quieter-looking street, with the trees of a square showing at the end, enticed her aside. Once she actually went up North Crediton Street, unconsciously and unnoticed. She reached one of the parks at last, and sat down very thankfully on a seat, though it was clammy and damp, and the fog was lurking under the gaunt, black trees, and hanging over the thin, coarse grass, which was being nibbled by dirty, desolate sheep, who looked to the old woman's eyes like some new kind of London animal, not to be recognized as belonging to the same species as the soft, fleecy white flocks on the hill-sides and meadows of Sunnybrook. She sat here a long time, resting, dozing, and trying

to think. "I don't want to trouble no one, or shame no one, I only want just to get out of the way." She was faint and tired, and she thought perhaps she might be going to die. "It 's a bit unked to die all alone, and I 'd liefer have died in my bed comfortable-like; but there! it don't much matter, it 'll soon be all over and an end to it all." But no! that would not do either; and the old woman roused herself and shook off the faintness. "Whatever would folks say if Laddie's mother was found dead like any tramp in the road? He 'd die of shame, pretty near, to hear it in every one's mouth." Poor old soul! she little knew how people can starve, and break their hearts, and die for want of food or love in London, and no one be the wiser or the sadder. It was just then she found out that her pocket had been picked, or rather that her purse was gone; for she did not wonder where or how it went, and, indeed, she did not feel the loss very acutely, though, at home in the old days, she had turned the house upside down and hunted high and low and spared no pains to find a missing halfpenny. It did not contain all her money, for with good, old-fashioned caution, she had some notes sewed up in her stays; but still it was a serious loss, and one she would have made

a great moan over in old times. She did not know that the sight of her worn old netted purse, with the rusty steel rings, had touched a soft spot in a heart that for years had seemed too dry and hard for any feeling. It had lain in the hand of an expert London pickpocket; it was mere child's-play taking it, it did not require any skill. There was a bit of lavender stuck into the rings, and he smelt and looked at it, and then the old woman turned and looked at him with her country eyes; and then all at once, almost in spite of himself, he held out the purse to her. "Don't you see as you 've dropped your purse?" he said, in a surly, angry tone, and finished with an oath that made the old woman tremble and turn pale; and he flung away, setting his teeth and calling himself a fool. That man was not all bad, — who is? — and his poor act of restitution is surely put to his credit in the ledger of his life, and will stand there when the books shall be opened. The old woman got little good from it, however, for the purse was soon taken by a less scrupulous thief.

How cold it was! The old woman shivered and drew her damp shawl round her, and longed, oh, how bitterly, for the old fireside, and the settle, worn and polished by generations of

shoulders; for the arm-chair with its patchwork cushion; longed, ah, how wearily, for the grave by the church-yard wall, where the master rests free of all his troubles, and where "there 's plenty of room for I;" and longed, too, quite as simply and pathetically, for a cup of tea out of the cracked brown tea-pot. But why should I dwell on the feelings of a foolish, insignificant old woman? There are hundreds and thousands about us whose lives are more interesting, whose thoughts are more worth recording. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?" and yet, "Doth not God take thought for sparrows?" Then, surely, so may we. Does He indeed despise not the desires of such as be sorrowful, — even though the sorrowful one be only an old country woman, and her desire a cup of tea? Then, why should we call that common and uninteresting which He pitifully beholds? And we shall find no life that is not full of interest, tender feeling, noble poetry, deep tragedy, just as there is nobody without the elaborate system of nerves and muscles and veins with which we are fearfully and wonderfully made.

The early November dusk was coming on before she set out on her pilgrimage again, the darkness coming all the earlier for the fog and

the London smoke; and then, hardly caring which way she went, she turned her face eastward, not knowing that she was making for the very heart of London. The streets were even more crowded and confusing than they had been in the morning; and the gas and the lighted shops, and the noise, and her own weariness, combined to increase her bewilderment.

Once, as she passed round the corner of a quieter street, some one ran up against her, and nearly threw her down, — a lady, the old woman would have described her, smartly, even handsomely, dressed, with a bright color on her cheeks, and glowing, restless, unhappy eyes, and dry, feverish lips. She spoke a hasty word of apology, and then, all at once, gave a sharp, sudden cry, and put her hands on the old woman's shoulders, and looked eagerly into her face. Then she pushed her away with a painful little laugh. "I thought you were my mother," she said.

"No, I never had no gals."

"You 're in luck, then," the girl said; "thank heaven for it."

"Was your mother, maybe, from the country?"

"Yes, she lived in Somersetshire. But I don't even know that she 's alive, and I think she must be dead. I hope she is — I hope it!"

There was something in the girl's voice that told of more bitter despair than her words, and the old woman put out her hand and laid it on the girl's velvet sleeve.

"My dear," she said, "maybe I could help you."

"Help!" was the answer. "I'm past that. There, good-night! Don't trouble your kind head about me."

And then the old woman went on again, getting into narrow, darker streets, with fewer shops, and people of a rougher, poorer class. But it would overtax your patience and my powers to describe the old woman's wanderings in the maze of London. Enough to say, that when, an hour or two later, footsore and ready to drop, she stumbled along a little street near Soho Square, a woman, with a baby in her arms, uttered a loud cry of pleased recognition, and darted out to stop her.

"Why, it ain't never you! Whoever would have thought of seeing you so soon; and however did you find me out? This is the house. Why, there, there! Dontee cry, sure! dontee, now! You 're tired out. Come in and have a cup of tea I 've got the kettle boiling all ready, for my Harry 'll be in soon."

It was the young woman she travelled with the day before, — only the day before, though it seemed months to look back to; only her face was bright and happy now, in spite of the fog and dirt about her; for had not her Harry a home and welcome for her, in spite of all her fears and people's evil prophecies; and was not this enough to make sunshine through the rainiest day?

Very improbable, you will say, perhaps, that these two waifs, these floating straws, should have drifted together on the great ocean of London life. Yes, very improbable, wellnigh impossible, I agree, if it is mere chance that guides our way; but stranger, more improbable things happen every day; and, if we mean anything by Providence, it is no longer difficult to understand, for we can see the Hand leading, guiding, arranging, weaving the tangled, confused threads of human life into the grand, clear, noble pattern of Divine purpose.

CHAPTER V.

EIGHTEEN months have passed away since my story began; and it is no longer dull, foggy November, but May, beautiful even in London, where the squares and parks are green and fresh, and the lilacs and laburnums in bloom, and the girls sell lilies-of-the-valley and wallflowers in the streets, and trucks with double stocks and narcissus "all a-growing and a-blowing" pass along, leaving a sweet, reviving scent behind them. The sky is blue, with great soft masses of cotton-wool cloud; and the air is balmy and pure in spite of smoke and dirt; and sweet spring is making his power felt, even in the very midst of London. It is blossoming time in the heart as well as in the Kentish apple-orchards; and the heart cannot help feeling gay and singing its happy little song even through its cares, like the poor larks in the Seven Dials' bird-shops, ruffling their soft breasts and knocking their poor brown heads against their cages in their ecstacy of song.

Dr. Carter had good cause for happiness that day, though, indeed, he was moving among sickness and suffering in a great London hospital. He had some lilies in his coat that Violet fastened there with her own hands; and as she did so he had whispered, "Only another week, Violet;" for their wedding-day was fixed in the next week. And was not that a thought that suited well with the lovely May weather, to make him carry a glad heart under the lilies? The wedding had been long delayed from one cause and another, but principally because the search for the old mother had been altogether fruitless, in spite of the confidence of the police.

"We will find her first," Violet would say; "we must find her, Laddie." She adopted the old name quite naturally. "And then we will talk of the wedding."

But time rolled on, days, weeks, and months, till at last it was more than a year ago that she had gone; and though they never gave up the hope of finding her, or their efforts to do so, still it no longer seemed to stand between them and give a reason for putting off the marriage, but rather to draw them nearer together, and give a reason for marrying at once. But on Dr. Carter's writing-table always stood the pair

of pattens, much to the surprise of patients; but he would not have them moved, and in his heart lay the pain and regret, side by side with his love and happiness.

The doctors were making their rounds in the hospital, with a crowd of medical students about them. There was a very interesting case in the accident ward, over which much time was spent, and much attention paid. I am not doctor enough to describe what the nature of the case was; and if I were, I daresay you would not care to hear; but it was a very interesting case to the doctors and nurses; and that means that life and death were fighting over that bed, and science bringing every reinforcement in its power in aid of the poor battered fortress that the grim king was attacking so severely. An easy victory on either one side or the other is very uninteresting to lookers-on, though of the deepest moment to the patient. And so the doctors passed on with hardly a word by the two next beds, in one of which life was the conqueror, hanging out his flags of triumph in a tinge of color on the cheeks, brightness in the eyes, and vigor in the limbs; in the other, death was as plainly to be seen in the still form and white, drawn face.

After the doctors and students had passed by,

and finished their round, Dr. Carter came back alone to No. 20. He had taken deep interest in the case, and had something to say further about it to the nurse. He was a great favorite with the nurses, from his courteous, gentle manners; so they were not disposed to regard his second visit as a troublesome, fidgety intrusion, as they might have done with some. He had not been quite pleased with the way in which a dresser had placed a bandage, and he altered it himself with those strong, tender fingers of his, and was just going off better satisfied, when he found the flowers had dropped from his coat. If they had not been Violet's gift it would not have mattered; but he did not like to lose what she had given, and he looked about for them. They had fallen, by some quick movement of his, on to the next bed, where death was having an easy victory.

The old woman's arms were stretched outside the bed-clothes, and one of her hands, hard-worked hands, with the veins standing up on the backs like cord, had closed, perhaps involuntarily, on the flowers, the lilies and the dainty green leaf.

"Here they are, sir," said the nurse; "they must have dropped as you turned round." And she tried to draw them from the woman's hand,

but it only closed the tighter. "She does n't know a bit what she 's about. Leave go of the flowers, there 's a good woman," she said close to her ear; "the gentleman wants them."

But the hand still held them.

"Well, never mind!" Dr. Carter said, with just a shade of vexation; "let her keep them. It does not matter, and you will only break them if you try to get them away."

"She 's not been conscious since they brought her in," the nurse said; "it 's a street accident; knocked down by an omnibus. We don't know her name, or nothing, and no one 's been to ask about her."

The doctor still stopped, looking at the lilies in the old hand.

"She is badly hurt," he said.

The nurse explained what the house surgeon had said: "Another day will see an end of it. I thought she would have died this morning when I first came on; she was restless then, and talked a little. I fancy she 's Scotch, for I heard her say 'Laddie' several times."

The word seemed to catch the otherwise unconscious ear, for the old woman turned her head on the pillow, and said feebly, "Laddie."

And then, all at once, the doctor gave a cry

that startled all the patients in the ward, and made many a one lift up her head to see the cause of such a cry.

"Mother!" he cried, "mother, is it you?"

Dr. Carter was kneeling by the bed, looking eagerly, wildly, at the wan white face. Was he mad? The nurse thought he must be, and this a sudden frenzy. And then he called again, —

"Mother, mother, speak to me!"

A childless mother near said afterwards she thought such a cry would have called her back from the dead, and it almost seemed to do so in this case, for the closed lids trembled and raised themselves a very little, and the drawn mouth moved into the ghost of a smile, and she said, —

"Eh, Laddie, here I be."

And then the nurse came nearer to reason with the madman.

"There is some mistake," she said; "this is quite a poor old woman."

And then he got up and looked at her, she said afterwards, "like my lord duke, as proud as anything."

"Yes," he said, "and she is my mother. I will make arrangements at once for her removal to my house if she can bear it."

Ah! that was the question, and it wanted lit-

tle examination or experience to tell that the old woman was past moving. The nurse, bewildered and still incredulous, persuaded him not to attempt it; and, instead, her bed was moved into a small ward off the large one, where she could be left alone.

Love is stronger than death; many waters cannot drown it. Yes, but it cannot turn back those cold waters of death, when the soul has once entered them; and so Dr. Carter found that with all his love and with all his skill, he could only smooth, and that but a very little, the steep stony road down into Jordan.

He got a nurse to attend specially upon her, but he would not leave her; and the nurse said it was not much good her being there, for he smoothed her pillows, and raised her head, and damped her lips, and fanned her with untiring patience and tenderness. Once when he had his arm under her head, raising it, she opened her eyes wide, and looked at him.

"Ah, Laddie," she said, "I 'm a bit tired with my journey. It 's a longish way from Sunnybrook."

"Did you come from there?"

"Yes, sure, I 've never been such a long way before, and I 'm tired out."

"Why did n't you write?" he asked presently, when she opened her eyes again.

"I wanted to give you a surprise," she said; "and I knew as you 'd be glad to see me at any time as I liked to come."

And then it dawned on him that the past eighteen months had been blotted clean out of her memory, and that she thought she had just arrived. Then she dozed, and then again spoke, "And so this is your house, Laddie? And mighty fine it be!" looking round on the bare hospital room; "and I 'm that comfortable if I was n't so tired, but I 'll be getting up when I 'm rested a bit. But it do me good to see you when I opens my eyes. I 've been thinking all the way how pleased you 'd be." All this she said a word or two at a time, and very low and weakly, so that only a son's ear could have heard.

As the evening came on she fell asleep very quietly, such a sleep as, if hope had been possible, might have given hope. Dr. Carter left the nurse watching her and went away, got a hansom and offered the man double fare to take him to Harley Street as fast as possible. Violet had just come in from a flower-show, and looked a flower herself, with her sweet face and dainty dress.

"I have found her," Laddie said. "Come."

And she came without asking a question, only knowing from Laddie's face that there was sorrow as well as joy in the finding.

"She is dying," he said, as they went up the hospital stairs together. "Can you bear it?"

She only answered by a pressure of her hand on his arm, and they went on to the quiet room. There was a shaded light burning, and the nurse sitting by the bedside.

"She has not stirred, sir, since you left."

But even as she spoke, the old woman moved and opened her eyes, looking first at Laddie and then on Violet.

"Who is it?" she asked.

And then Violet knelt down with her sweet face close to the old woman's, and said very softly, "Mother, I am Laddie's sweetheart."

"Laddie's sweetheart;" she echoed; "he's over-young to be wed — but there! I forget. He's been a good son, my dear, always good to his old mother, and he'll be a good husband. And you'll make him a good wife, my dear, won't you? God bless you."

And then her trembling hand was feeling for something, and Laddie guessed her wish, and put his own hand and Violet's into it; two young hands, full of life and health and pulsation,

under the old, worn, hard-worked hand, growing cold and weak with death.

"God bless you, dears, Laddie and his sweetheart. But I 'm a bit tired just now."

And then she dozed again, and the two sat by in the dim, quiet room, drawn closer together and dearer to each other than they ever had been before, in the presence of the Great Angel of Death who was so near the old mother now. And very tenderly he did his work that night! Only a sigh and then a sudden hush, during which the listeners' pulses throbbed in their ears, as they listened for the next long-drawn, painful, difficult breath that did not come; and then the weary limbs relaxed into the utter repose and stillness of rest after labor, for the night had come when no man can work, — the holy starlit night of death, with the silver streaks of the great dawn of the Resurrection shining in the east.

For a moment they sat spell-bound; and then it was Laddie, he who had so often seen death face to face, who gave way, throwing himself on the bed with an exceeding bitter cry, "O mother, mother, say you forgive me!"

What need for words? Did he not know that she forgave him? If indeed she knew that she had anything to forgive. But she was "a bit tired."

Don't you know when bedtime comes, and the nurse calls the children, how sometimes they leave their toys, which a few minutes before seemed all in all to them, without a look, and the cake unfinished, and are carried off with their heads bent down, and their eyes heavy with sleep, too tired even to say good-night, or speak a pretty, lisping word of the play-time past, or the pleasures coming in the morning? And so it is often with us bigger children; when the nurse Death calls us at our bedtime, we are "a bit tired," and glad to go, too sleepy even for thought or farewell.

They laid her by the old master in Sunnybrook churchyard; and the village folks talked long afterwards of the funeral, and how Dr. Carter, "he as used to be called Laddie," followed her to the grave, "along with the pretty young lady as he was going to marry; and, bless my heart! would n't the poor old soul have felt proud if she could have seen 'em? But she 's better where she is, where there ain't no buryin' and no pride neither."

THE END.

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